

School Exclusion:
Exploring Young People's Views

Christiana Loizidou

Institute of Education University of London

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Supervisors: Professor Andrew Tolmie

Dr Shaalan Farouk

Author: Christiana Loizidou

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Institute of Education University of London
Department of Psychology and Human Development

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ABSTRACT

Although school exclusion's negative effects on children, their families, schools and on society in general have been extensively researched, the phenomenon of school exclusion still exists. Previous research has justified the procedure of obtaining pupils' own views as a valuable methodology to develop an understanding of the impact of school exclusion. It has also been suggested that in order to have a greater understanding of school exclusion, further research needs to consider contextual factors such as those related to school and family systems.

The study employed a mixed methodological design. Semi-structured interviews were used to explore the experiences of thirteen young pupils regarding school exclusion. In addition, an attitude questionnaire to school and the individual was administered to all participants. Two groups of pupils were involved in this project: pupils who had been permanently excluded (Group One: n=7) and pupils who were at the greatest risk of permanent exclusion but had managed to avoid exclusion. (Group Two: n=6). The sample involves Year 8 and Year 9 pupils, boys and girls educated in settings across an out of London authority (two out of school provisions and one mainstream secondary school). The main aim of this study was to identify risk factors that cause exclusion, but more importantly, ascertain critical factors that prevent exclusion from school by investigating pupils' narratives.

Findings derived from the data analysis emphasised the importance of good, positive relationships among all parties (teachers, parents, child), as well as the importance of communication and coordination between the three systems (school, family, child). Furthermore, the data analysis revealed the presence of family support as the most substantial difference between the two groups and indicated how this factor was critical for pupils to avoid school exclusion.

Particular attention is given to the factors that help exclusion to be avoided, in order to suggest ways of developing more positive strategies for dealing with school exclusion. Implications for educational psychology practice and service provision are discussed. Avenues for future research are suggested.

Declaration

I hereby declare that, except where explicit attribution is made, the work presented in this thesis is entirely my own.

Signed

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Christiana Loizidou

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Phenomenon of School Exclusion

Exclusion from school is perhaps the most explicit form of rejection by a school of its pupils and for some excluded pupils increases the likelihood of wider social exclusion (Munn & Lloyd, 2005). As soon as a pupil is excluded from school, he/she has only limited chances of returning back to his/her school and rejoining his/her peers in mainstream education – statistics indicate this to be approximately 27% (Gordon, 2001). There is evidence that the time young people spend out of school does matter and has an impact upon their lives. For example, school exclusion has been associated with a significantly higher likelihood of becoming a teenage parent, being unemployed or homeless later in life, or even ending up in prison (Evangelical Alliance UK and Care for Education, 1999, cited in Gordon, 2001). Researchers have associated this situation with additional poor outcomes later in life, for instance difficulties with relationships, unstable employment, crime involvement, social exclusion (Nuffield Foundation, 2004). It could be argued that school exclusion does not only exacerbate the obvious underachievement of those pupils who are excluded, but, most crucially, it puts them at a disadvantage for the rest of their lives (Moss, 1999, cited in Gordon, 2001).

In a recent study carried out by Munn and Lloyd (2005) one of the participants commented on the impact school exclusion has on pupils and their families: *“The minute the child is put out of the class, you’ve started something. You’ve started their*

sense of, 'I am not coping', and a lot of children, to keep their pride, will suggest it doesn't matter. 'Throw me out again, see if I care...' I think that for the people that are involved in dealing out exclusion, [exclusion] has become like (doing) lines. It's meaningless, absolutely meaningless. I don't think they realise just what an impact it has on the family and on the children" (p. 1).

Indeed, exclusion is not only a way of punishing a pupil, but, also punishes the pupil's family. Parents become solely responsible for their son/daughter during the period of their exclusion. On a practical level alone, working parents now need to find a way of looking after their children during the day. When interviewed by Hayden and Dunne (2001) parents referred to being traumatised, stigmatised and feeling isolated, when their son or daughter had been excluded. Munn and Lloyd (2005) also report on the effect that exclusion can have on a pupil's family. They include: irritation with the child itself; inconvenience; stress, mainly caused by frustration with the system; family arguments; mother or siblings stigmatised. Furthermore, these outcomes come on top of other existing stressful situations in the family. As "these families are often already under a great deal of stress i.e. poverty, divorce, mental health problems" (Munn & Lloyd, 2005, p. 11), school exclusion and its effects potentially exacerbate these family difficulties.

Local Authorities (LA) and schools also have to deal with the effects of school exclusion, mainly due to the practical problems generated by this decision. Once the decision to exclude becomes official, practical difficulties are often raised for these two parties as they become responsible for where and how to educate pupils excluded from school (Hayden & Dunne, 2001). Since September 2007, schools

have been required to arrange full time alternative education for excluded pupils for a fixed period from the sixth day of exclusion and likewise LAs from the sixth day of permanent exclusion (Guidance on Exclusion from Schools, 2008).

Parsons et al. (1994) and Parsons (1999) have highlighted the financial cost of school exclusion. They suggest that maintaining children in mainstream education and diagnosing, meeting their needs, could possibly cost much less than the amount spent annually providing them with alternative education. There is also the strong likelihood that a significant proportion of those young pupils who may remain unsupported would go on to be adults displaying similar or even more serious problems such as anti social behaviour and crime. Research also indicates that people with continuing anti social behaviour have cost society up to ten times more than those with 'no problems' – including costs of public services such as extra educational provision, unemployment benefits (Nuffield Foundation, 2004).

Apart from these financial costs, there are other reasons why school exclusion remains a crucial issue that needs to be addressed. Schools often have difficulty accommodating 'challenging' students, especially when their performance is measured predominantly in terms of a narrow set of performance indicators. Consequently, they often use exclusion as the short term 'solution to the problem'. However, in the long term, this 'solution' may cause a range of other problems for the child, its family, the school and the society in general. School exclusion can be a traumatising experience for both the child and their family to overcome; furthermore it can also be a difficult situation for the teacher, school and LA. Thus, LAs, schools

and parents need to work closely with the child in a more preventative way to enable him/her to stay at school.

In order to intervene effectively in addressing school exclusion, there is a need to understand what makes exclusion more likely and the reasons and processes that cause exclusion. Most importantly, though, there is a need to understand what prevents exclusion from occurring. In other words, to identify and understand the factors which support a child to remain at school and not to become permanently excluded.

1.2 Setting the Scene

1.2.1. The National Context

The exclusion from school is a disciplinary action that can only be exercised by a Head Teacher (Guidance on Exclusion from Schools, 2008). There are three main types of exclusion: (a) *lunchtime*¹; (b) *fixed period*²; and (c) *permanent*³ *exclusion*.

Since the 1944 Education Act, Head Teachers have the right to exclude pupils from schools. Subsequently, school exclusion had not been an issue until the early 1990s when the first national monitoring of exclusion data became available. At the time

¹ A pupil's behaviour is unacceptable, disruptive at lunchtime, so students are excluded from the school premises for the duration of the lunchtime period and are under their parents' responsibility during lunch break.

² A student is excluded from school for a fixed, predetermined period of time, before resuming their studies at the same school on a given date.

³ A student is removed from a school's roll and permanently barred from returning.

there was a rapid increase in exclusion figures (Lown, 2005) to the extent where concerns and debate regarding exclusion figures had become commonplace.

The government aimed to reduce school exclusion rates and encourage education for *all* children and this has been endorsed in national guidelines and policies for decades. In 1997, the Social Exclusion Policy Unit emphasised the need to ameliorate school exclusion figures; the reduction of levels of permanent exclusions was set as a priority for schools. The Unit set targets in order to reduce exclusion by one-third within five years. These targets included, providing excluded pupils with a full-time timetable within three weeks of exclusion, the requirement to provide performance tables of GCSE results for all Year 10 excluded students and to pay particular attention to looked after excluded children.

In spite of these early efforts to set targets for exclusion, this endeavour was brought to a close despite school exclusion figures increasing. In recent years, there has been less focus on exclusion and more on pupil achievement and exam results. As a result of the inspection of schools by OFSTED and the subsequent ranking of these schools in league tables, they have become publicly assessed by their SATs and exam results rather than by their exclusion figures. Consequently, it could be argued that this practise has in fact impacted on school exclusion figures. As explained by Hart (1997), the introduction of published league tables, OFSTED inspections and the public identification of 'failing schools' provide little incentive for schools to 'hang on' to those pupils who are likely to affect schools' reputation and public image (cited in Rendall and Stuart, 2005, p. 7).

In other words, schools appeared to have developed lower tolerance levels towards pupils with challenging behaviour because of the requirement to obtain good results in a competitive education system.

1.2.2. The Local Context

This thesis reports on a small-scale research project within one LA. This authority was identified as one of the lowest excluding authorities nationally. Data published on school exclusion revealed that permanent exclusions in primary and secondary schools in this county have fallen over the last years and continue to remain significantly below national levels.

The Managed Move (MM) policy is a recent strategy that was proposed and implemented by this county as an alternative to permanent exclusion. According to this policy, a student may be transferred to another mainstream school or to another provider (i.e. out of school setting). This can be offered by a Head Teacher to those students who would otherwise be excluded permanently. The purpose behind this strategy is to move the student to a new school that would enable him/her to make a fresh start and hopefully better progress.

Thompson (1996) maintains that “for many children, just being forced to change schools, is often enough to make them wake up” (cited in Gordon, 2001). However, Thompson is also aware that simply changing schools is often not enough and that a

more integrated approach is needed. Accordingly, in some situations a MM could be an effective approach if it is part of an integrated strategy.

Pupils, whose MM in a mainstream school has failed, can be transferred to an out of school setting called EOTAS (Education Other Than at School). These 'centres' provide education for pupils who either have been permanently excluded, or had a series of fixed period exclusions and their MM in the mainstream school has failed. There are a number of these units across this particular county that have been developed and are available for these groups of pupils. Some students attending these centres are educated on a part time basis but may also be educated in a mainstream secondary school for a few hours a week as part of their reintegration program. While some students however, are educated only in this provision and there may be no official plan to reintegrate them into a mainstream setting.

In effect, this last group of pupils has been 'permanently excluded', as there is no plan for their reintegration. According to the definition of permanent exclusion (Guidance on School Exclusion, 2008) though, permanently excluded pupils are not only permanently barred from returning to their school, but their name is also removed from the school's roll. The situation in this LA is slightly different, despite the fact there is no plan to reintegrate these pupils, they are still on their school's roll and their mainstream school is responsible to provide funding for their education in EOTAS.

For the purpose of this study, however, the official definition is much less important than whether or not these pupils, functionally speaking, experience permanent

exclusion and the negative effects associated with it. Therefore, this study is more concerned about pupils' experiences per se, linked to the fact that they cannot be educated in a mainstream setting, rather than whether permanent exclusion was officially implemented by schools.

1.2.3. The Extent of School Exclusion

Based on the DCSF published tables and on data available, there has been a rapid increase on fixed period school exclusion over the last decade, while the current rates of permanent exclusion remain static. Whereas, in the LA where this project took place, as previously mentioned, the rate of permanent exclusion remained extremely low, in fact below the national levels. See Appendix 1 for a detailed table showing the national and local extent of school exclusion.

The rate of permanent exclusions in this particular authority is low but this is most likely as a consequence of MM, rather than there actually being fewer pupils in out of school educational settings. In some cases, while MM may result in students attending another school, it could be due to children being excluded from school – and attending an out of school provision. As previously stated, the outcome for the student undergoing MM or having been permanently excluded is often the same. The pupils end up attending a unit that provides a limited range of education with limited prospects of returning to school. Moreover, as they are still on roll of the school where they have been excluded from they may have even less opportunity for re-integration as they cannot return to this school. By contrast, pupils who have been

'properly' permanently excluded are no longer on roll and are therefore available for be re-integrated into other schools.

It is highly probable that the number of pupils actually educated outside mainstream schools has been underestimated because these national and local figures do not actually include those students educated outside mainstream classes. Many pupils remain on the roll of the mainstream school, even when they may never enter it (Lloyd, Stead & Kendrick, 2003).

Various methods can be employed by schools to discourage students from attending school and/or encourage parents to voluntarily withdrawn their child from school, without the school having to actually go through the standard procedures of exclusion. These methods have been defined as 'informal' and 'voluntary' forms of exclusions by Stirling (1996). Indeed, schools tend to use some in-school alternatives to exclusion, for instance, internal exclusion, part-time school attendance (Munn, Lloyd & Cullen, 2000). Likewise, some 'out-of-school' alternatives to exclusion, such as MM, may produce a reduction in school's exclusion figures. These alternatives to exclusion can be used by schools to keep away pupil who 'causes problems', but without officially excluding him/her. This means that although exclusion numbers and figures of schools and of the authority, in general, may show a substantial decrease, in fact 'problematic' students are not attending school and being educated in other settings. Educational settings or units where the education offered is often limited and its quality neglected are ignored (Munn, Lloyd & Cullen, 2000).

Consequently, because of the difficulty to measure these forms of exclusion, it may suggest the national data on exclusion does not reflect the reality of this situation. Previous research (Cullen et al., 1996; Parsons, 1999; Lawrence & Hayden, 1997; Munn & Lloyd, 2005; Strling, 1992) has clearly illustrated the difficulty in obtaining accurate figures that reflect the true extent of school exclusion.

Besides the need to collect data that accurately represents the number of pupils not attending school due to behaviour difficulties, there is also a need to look at the emotional and psychological process of school exclusion. Crucially, there is a need to look at what makes exclusion less likely to occur. One approach is to identify possible ameliorating factors by listening to the experiences of pupils who have been permanently excluded or who are at risk of permanent exclusion, as is taken up in the next section.

1.3 The Present Study

1.3.1. The Educational Psychologist (EP) role and contribution

An important part of EP practice is to advocate children and young adults' views and take these into account, particularly when evaluating the quality of their education and planning their school future. Therefore a major implication for EP is to elicit these views and balance such information sensitively with the perspectives and experiences of parents, teachers and other significant adults (Gersch, 2004).

Thus, Cameron (2006) recommends that EP practice should be creative and apply innovative ways in order to comprehend a variety of complex environments (e.g. school, children's home), complex problems and situations which occur in such environments (e.g. children's learning and behaviour difficulties) and the results of such problems. For instance, confront current belief system of understanding challenging behaviour with new and different insights.

Therefore, whilst practising EP the purpose of this study was to provide a deeper understanding of the interactive systems where a child's behaviour occurs and in turn provide an insight into how these systems may prevent or contribute to exclusion.

This study is based upon the assumption that human behaviour is viewed from an eco-systemic perspective which emphasises the complex, interdependent and recurring nature of the links between a variety of contextual, personal and interpersonal variables. Such a stance described by Cameron (2006) and involves: adopting an interactive rather than a single-factor view of problem situations; recognising that human problems have different levels or layers (ranging from person to home, school, community and beyond); attempting to understand and reconcile the different perspectives which people may bring to a particular problem situation; unpicking the human factors which can hasten or hinder the process of desired change (p. 293).

1.3.2. Pupil Voice

The recent professional practice and research activity in the field of school exclusion aims to implement the investigation of pupils' voices. However, only a few research projects (e.g. Hilton, 2006; Hayden & Dunne, 2001; Munn & Lloyd, 2005; Rendall & Stuart, 2005) have fully taking into consideration the voice of the child by exploring their personal views and experiences of school exclusion. These studies strongly suggest that an insight into pupils' views and perceptions of school exclusion could be used to improve our understanding of school exclusion and the design of more effective interventions to prevent pupils' exclusions from school.

Rudduck et al. (1996) commented on the importance of capturing the views of all pupils and especially those who had experienced school exclusion. Similarly, Munn and Lloyd (2005) argued that when schools listen to the most 'troubled' and 'troublesome' pupils, they might be able to develop practices that would help to keep some of these pupils in a mainstream setting and eventually, the wider school and social community would benefit. The authors claim that through listening to this group of pupils – the most 'troubled' and 'troublesome' pupils – the way the school system is actually operating could be improved. The views of excluded pupils could illuminate the taken-for-granted manner the school system operates. They further argue how those pupils who are disaffected can offer a particular perspective on schooling that is clearly a different from pupils who usually have a successful schooling life and are often marginalised by this group whose school experience has been on the whole happy and successful.

Additionally, Gordon (2001) maintains that young people who are troubled are the most important participants in the school exclusion policy debate: “We should ask the right questions and listen to these children’s voices before imposing adult solutions” (p. 83).

For these reasons, some researchers have focused on exploring the most ‘troublesome’ young people’s views and perceptions on school exclusion in order to understand why exclusion takes place. Obviously, in order to understand why school exclusion is occurring and the causes of this phenomenon, there is a need to consider more carefully and explore the central views and perceptions of those pupils who have experienced either fixed period or permanent exclusion from school.

1.3.3. Narrative Theory

This study involved collecting data by listening to the experiences of pupils and considering their narratives of events. This project was not concerned with trying to establish what is ‘true’, but concerned with young people’s own stories of what they had experienced. This position is also supported by Reissman (1993) who claimed that “the historical truth is not the primary issue” (p. 64), especially when it may be more constructive to obtain people’s narratives of events.

According to narrative theory, people’s personal reality is organised and sustained through the construction of multiple stories about themselves and about those they relate to. Furthermore, it is about the way people make sense of events by placing

them into meaningful sequences over time (Friedman & Comps, 1996; Dallos, 1997). Indeed, according to this theory, narratives give rise to meaning. Personal experiences are constructed as stories and these personal constructions give rise to interpretations or meanings about the self and about relations with others. These interpretations or meanings then determine human behaviour.

Therefore in order to understand human behaviour it is important to explore human beings' narratives and their interpretations of events. The rationale for focusing on stories and the meanings that arise from them lies in the assumption that people's personal stories about themselves and others act as an organising framework for their behaviour in all life situations.

Similarly, pupils' behaviour is based on their construction of the meaning of events. Therefore according to narrative theory exploring pupils' personal stories and constructs can provide the researcher with a better understanding of their behaviour, as their meanings of events have an influence on their actions and on what is happening to them.

In this study, narrative theory is applied using semi structured interviews to elicit stories from the participants. Any conclusions that arise are based purely on these young people's perspectives, views and ideas shared with the researcher.

Therefore, this study is focused on young people's perceptions and interpretations of events and not with the factual 'truth' of these events.

1.3.4. Aims and Research Questions

Previous studies have explored the views of pupils who have been excluded from school. However, a study that explores and compares the views of excluded pupils and pupils who were 'at risk' of exclusion, but avoided permanent exclusion has yet to be conducted. Therefore, this research aims to explore the views of these two groups of pupils namely, those who have been permanently excluded and those who have avoided permanent exclusion but have experienced fixed term exclusions. This key issue has been missing in past research. This study has been undertaken because it intends to identify significant factors that are important in avoiding school exclusion, rather than just identify conditions that make exclusion more likely. Using this basis, this study claims to make an original contribution in the research area of school exclusion.

In this study, there is specific focus on pupils' perceptions of school, family and themselves. In relation to school the line of enquiry the focus is on teacher-pupil relationships, peer relations and friendships and academic achievement. In relation to home and family, issues such as parent-pupil relationships and stressful family events are also explored. Finally, in relation to the pupils themselves the focus is on their personal attributions about their exclusion from school.

This project's main area of research is to identify those critical factors (within school, family, child systems) that pupils are highlighting as being risk factors to exclusion and or support factors to avoid exclusion. This project has four main research questions to explore. (1) What factors do pupils highlight as risk factors / support

factors related to the school system? (2) What factors do pupils highlight as risk factors / support factors related to the family system? (3) What factors do pupils highlight as risk factors / support factors that relate to themselves and their behaviour? (4) What differences in perceptions of self, family and school can be found between the two groups?

1.4 Overview of the Study

This chapter sets the scene for the research and is defined by detailing information about the national and local context, as well as the extent of school exclusion and its effects on pupils, their families, schools, LAs and society in general. In addition, special reference to the voice of the child and to narrative theory has been given, illustrating the importance and necessity of conducting this research together with outlining the main scope and questions of the study. Chapter Two frames the background on which this research is based. It presents a review of the literature conducted in the field of school exclusion and the main findings and recommendations. Chapter Three refers to the Methodology used in this study, describing the methods used for collecting and analysing data and also justifying the choice of these methods. Findings from the data collection are presented in Chapter Four. These findings are discussed in Chapter Five with reference to previous research. Finally, Chapter Six highlights the key findings from this study and makes recommendations for professional practice, as well as, suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This study has identified the phenomena of school exclusion as a prevailing research issue for a number of decades. Due to a large proportion of research material associated with this topic, the researcher needed to refine the volume of literature reviewed and presented in this section. Consequently, a structure was devised to manage the literature reviewed.

Studies that investigated the reasons, factors and characteristics that may cause vulnerability to exclusion were deemed as a logical starting point. Particular attention was ascribed to theories and perspectives that dealt with behaviour that may lead to school exclusion, especially systemic and interactionist approaches. A central strategy utilised in this review was to identify and explore previous research, mainly qualitative research, which valued the voice of the child when exploring school exclusion. For instance, database engines (e.g. psychINFO, SwetsWise, ScienceDirect, Wiley InterScience, IngentaConnect) were initially searched with the use of terms like 'pupils and school exclusion', 'child's voice and school exclusion', 'social, emotional, behaviour difficulties and school exclusion', 'school difficulties and school exclusion' etc. A more detailed search was then conducted , in order to narrow down the topics such as 'excluded pupils and relations with parents/teachers/peers'; excluded pupils and attainment'. Throughout this structured process of reviewing the relevant literature, studies by Rendall and Stuart (2005) and Munn and Lloyd (2000; 2001a, b; 2005) were identified as crucial examples in this

area primarily because these studies investigated school exclusion by valuing the voice of the excluded child and their surrounding systems (i.e. family, school) with the application of a systemic approach and interactionist perspective.

First, the formal reasons for exclusion and characteristics of the most vulnerable groups of young people who have been excluded are presented and discussed. Second, theories and principles about understanding pupils' behaviour that often lead to their exclusion from school are presented. Finally, an emphasis is given to previous research evidence collected from studies investigating pupils' own perceptions of school exclusion.

2.2 Reasons and Vulnerability to School Exclusion

Munn, Lloyd and Cullen (2000) published a detailed list recording the key reasons given by schools' Head Teachers for excluding students. This included: fighting or assault disruptive behaviour, failure to obey rules, abuse or insolence, threatening behaviour, vandalism, bullying and extortion. Overall, it was highlighted that the most common reason for both boys and girls to be excluded related to fighting between pupils and this usually occurred in the playground. This data is in line with other studies that identified reasons for school exclusion (Gilborn, 1996; Gordon, 2001; Munn & Lloyd, 2005). Yet, apart from imparting the formal reasons for exclusion, they provide us with only a limited insight into the underlying causes for exclusion.

Research in this field (Booth, 1996; Gordon, 2001; Munn & Lloyd, 2005; Lloyd, Stead & Kendrick, 2003) also explored factors and characteristics that may cause vulnerability to school exclusion. Recent research has identified particular social groups that are at the greatest risk of school exclusion. These findings indicate that among the excluded population there is a disproportionately number of boys, aged 14-15 and children from deprived backgrounds are also greatly over-represented in the excluded population. In addition it appears that pupils are more likely to be excluded if they have low attainment and or have special educational needs (SEN) and or are looked after children. Indeed, according to the latest national data on exclusion from school (DCSF, 2006/7; 2007/08), it appears that boys are nearly three to four times more likely to get excluded than girls – this ratio between boys and girls has remained stable over the last five years – whereas the most common age point for both boys and girls to be excluded is at ages 13 to 14, equivalent to Year groups 9 and 10. Pupils with SEN (both with and without statements) are over eight to nine times more likely to be permanently excluded from school than the rest of the school population. Additionally, children who are eligible for free school meals – a factor linked to child's family socio-economic status – are around three times more likely to receive either a permanent or fixed period exclusion than children who are not eligible for free school meals.

These risk factors seem to contribute to a child displaying social, emotional, behavioural difficulties (SEBD) and therefore increase the probability of the child being excluded. Clearly, children from these backgrounds are more likely to misbehave in school for a variety of reasons and consequently be an easier target for exclusion. However, the claim that children with SEN are more likely to be

excluded is a confusing one, since children who display SEBD could also be categorised as SEN.

Still, neither the formal reasons for exclusion, nor the identification of the most vulnerable groups of young people to exclusion enables us to understand the underlying factors which contribute to school exclusion. The argument put forward in this scenario is that greater emphasis needs to be given to the process that culminates in school exclusion. Thus, further analysis is needed to understand pupils' behaviour in particular, understanding their emotional and behavioural difficulties that expose them to the possibility of presenting challenging behaviour – and ultimately the actions that have lead to them being excluded from school. As Rendall and Stuart (2005) claim:

“understanding is the first step to changing behaviour; if professionals working with children, parents living with children and children themselves can have a greater understanding of their behaviours, they may feel they have a greater control in bringing about a change and making a difference” (p. 186).

For a more comprehensive understanding of young people's challenging behaviour which may lead to exclusion implementing systemic thinking and an interactionist perspective can provide a more meaningful insight. Such factors include; background characteristics, school and family circumstances and conditions, while individual characteristics need to be considered as a whole to develop a meaningful understanding of the causes of exclusion.

2.3 Understanding Behaviour and School Exclusion

To research school exclusion, focus has to be given to models developed in understanding human behaviour and in particular, understanding young people's behaviour presented in the school context. After all, how can particular behaviour be explained – whether it is described within child factors or whether its causes are attributed to the interactions between systems will have a profound impact on the level of understanding and preventing school exclusion.

Broadly speaking, explanations for disaffection or challenging behaviour fall into two categories. One set of explanations for challenging behaviour is predominantly located as 'causes' within the individual child and or his/her family. The other set of explanations concerns the views challenging behaviour from a more systemic and interactionist perspective which explains behaviour as being the result of relations and interactions between systems – the society, school, family and the child.

Pomeratz (2005) argued that in the past most explanations fell into the first category – behaviour problems were perceived as a fixed characteristic of the child. Their focus was stressing the 'impairment' of the child and underplaying, even ignoring, the impact of environmental factors (Lindsay, 2003). Indeed, if any environmental factors were taken into consideration then these had made their impact on the child in his/her earliest experiences because of some traumatic life events within a dysfunctional family. The individual child was often seen and described as behaving 'badly' or even 'mad'; thus, requiring medical or even psychiatric treatment and or

punishment (Bridgeland, 1971); consequently, “the implication of such a view was that education for the affected child was impossible” (Sandow, 1994, p.2).

However, researchers are now able to provide evidence to suggest that education does influence a child’s behaviour, even for the most disaffected individual. In particular, evidence from studies on school effectiveness and on successful inclusion of all children, does in fact highlight the influence of the school upon their behaviour (i.e. Ainscow, 1995; Frederickson et al., 2004; Hargreaves et al., 1975; McLaughlin, 1995; Scruggs & Mastropieri, 1994). These studies summarise various aspects of school which culminate to make a significant difference upon a child’s behaviour and future. For example, a welcoming school environment and inclusive school ethos; active, effective leadership and clear, shared vision; positive teacher-pupil relationships, appropriate curriculum promoting high expectations for all; active pupil participation in schooling.

Additionally, researchers have provided evidence to suggest that family factors do have a profound influence upon children’s behaviour in school. Specifically, research into the early development of a child, highlights the influence that family circumstances have on a child’s future development and emotional well-being. For example, family risk factors such as early separation from the main carer (usually the mother), the loss of a close relative, divorce and family separation, the serious illness of a family member, have all been identified in previous research and can be described as situations that increase the likelihood of children developing emotional and or behavioural difficulties at some point in their lives (Bowlby, 1969; Rutter, 1981; Werner, 1989; Woodward, Fergusson & Belsky, 2000). Furthermore, research

evidence from studies on parental support and involvement emphasises the impact of parenting on children's emotional, behavioural and educational progress. This evidence supports the positive effects family involvement has on children's academic achievement, social competence and school quality (i.e. Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003; Webster-Stratton, 1999).

With this evidence in mind, it could be argued how the child's behaviour and education can be affected, either positively or negatively, by the presence or absence of specific factors within these systems surrounding him/her, i.e. school and family systems. Thus, it could be hypothesised that children's behaviour, even the most challenging, are the outcomes of the interactions between the pupil and the other members of the systems surrounding them (Pomerantz, 2005), for example the relationships between the pupil and the teacher; the child and the parent. Hence, rather than focusing upon the causes situated within the child, explanations now fall into the second category. Consequently, instead of individual treatment and punishment, contextual and systemic analysis is now required (Tobbell & Lawthom, 2005).

Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory (1978) assumed the individual and their development can only be meaningfully understood in the social context. Initially Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory focused on the development of cognitive skills but has more recently been applied to wider aspects of human development (Rogoff, 2003). Thus, even when exploring the phenomenon of school exclusion, the individual should not be separated from his/her context (Rendall & Stuart, 2005), such as the activities the child is engaged in, the family the child is a member, the

peer group which the child engages with, the institution where the child is a part, the community where the child lives.

Valuing the social context of the child subsequently leads to the need to identify and investigate the systems surrounding the child. Studies on school exclusion aim to analyse the interactions of the three basic interconnected systems – the school, family and the individual; each system is assumed to be interconnected with all the other systems in a complex variety of ways. Applying this model of thinking contributes to the avoidance of viewing causation as resulting from individual factors solely and from simplistic assumptions regarding within child explanations of behaviour difficulties (Lloyd Bennett, 2005). Alternatively it could be argued how “the causes reside in the interactional processes between two or more people, rather than solely in individuals” (Rendall & Stuart, 2005, p. 20). This leads to the adoption of a dialectic approach rather than a linear one to causality that takes account of the interrelationships between an individual’s systems and even more crucially, moves away from a blame culture.

Indeed, systematic thinking has been applied to several studies (Hayden & Dunne, 2001; Munn & Lloyd, 2005) that reveal information that underpins how systems interact and how these interactions may influence the behaviour of a child and may expose him/her to the risk of exclusion from school.

The following example demonstrates how the systems interact and how these interactions may put a child at the greatest risk of exclusion. When a school that has no clear vision of inclusion may have difficulties to develop good and close

relationships with *all* pupils and their families; relationships between school and family may break down and consequently difficulties experienced in the home environment may not be communicated with the school. Research has demonstrated how the families of those children, who exhibit challenging behaviour at school, are often in crisis or under considerable pressure (i.e. Munn & Lloyd, 2005). Therefore these children are subject to a significant amount of anxiety and stress at home and at the same time receive no support from school, primarily because school is often totally unaware of the home situation due to a poor relationship with their parents or guardians. In spite of these difficulties, some children may show resilience. However, others who are less resilient will be at greater risk of becoming excluded, especially when the situation is exacerbated by a dysfunctional school and family systems. In these cases children can respond to their circumstances either by withdrawing and isolating themselves, or by acting out their frustrations through angry, disruptive and sometimes violent behaviours (Rendall & Stuart, 2005).

This scenario illustrates how systems are interrelated and how difficult it can be to understand school exclusion as the result of these interrelations. However, only when these complexities between systems are explored in depth can a meaningful understanding of school exclusion be developed.

This interactionist and systemic understanding of behavioural difficulties as well as the importance of people's personal social constructs of interpreting their life events are supported by a substantial number of researchers who studied the phenomenon of school exclusion (Cooper & Upton, 1990; Hayden & Dunne, 2001; Miller et al., 2002; Munn & Lloyd, 2000; Rendall & Stuart, 2005). These studies concur that a

close investigation of the series of relationships between the interrelated systems of the individual is vital in order to comprehend the ramifications of school exclusion. Most researchers who have conducted research that explore school exclusion place considerable value on the voice of the child. Many of these projects focused on exploring the perceptions of those pupils who primarily experienced exclusion from school.

2.4 Pupils' Perceptions of School Exclusion

The literature regarding pupils' behaviour has described the fundamental need to bring all three systems together, the child, family and school, when researching school exclusion. Using this application, Rendall and Stuart (2005) applied a systemic model of inquiry to explore school exclusion. Despite the fact the vast majority of literature on school exclusion (Parsons et al., 1994; Hayden, 1997) at that time focused on one or two aspects, such as school variables, or family circumstances or special educational needs. They decided to combine all the three systems in their study: the child's own inner world (a system compromising, for example, personality, attribution, innate abilities), the family (a system compromising, for example, culture, dynamics between family members, family structures, family scripts), and school (a system compromising, for example, culture and ethos). Their aim was to further the understanding of how these factors lead to some children becoming permanently excluded from schools.

Their study has been a corner stone in the research area of school exclusion, not only because the authors collected data relating to characteristics within these three interrelating systems, school, family and the individual, but also because they matched and compared a group of non excluded pupils to a group of permanently excluded pupils.

Two groups of pupils were recruited namely; a group of permanently excluded pupils and a matched group of non-excluded pupils (same age, gender, ethnicity, and school). The participants in the second group were considered to be unlikely candidates for exclusion of any kind in the foreseeable future. A mixed methodology was utilised in their study – interviews and questionnaires were conducted, with both groups of pupils, their parents and school staff. The most important findings from this study were those relating to the pupils' views and are discussed as follows.

Their results illustrate the differences between the two groups with respect to their academic skills; levels of self-esteem and their locus of control. In particular, excluded pupils appeared to be academically less able and under achievers. There were also notable differences between the two groups in terms of scales of self-esteem measures with the excluded pupils showing lower scores in domains such as close friendships, global self-esteem. Moreover, the excluded group showed more external locus of control than the comparison group, meaning that excluded pupils blamed their exclusion and difficulties entirely upon things beyond their control and appeared unable to change their ways. Not surprisingly, this study demonstrated that excluded pupils cited a lack of support from their teachers and parents and overall, felt badly about themselves in the school context.

When exploring particular factors within the family system, it was revealed that families of excluded children had generally experienced more risk factors than those of the comparison children i.e. early separation from mother, serious illness of a parent. Thus, excluded children were more likely than the comparison group to have experienced a large combination of different risk factors. These families usually felt unsupported and often showed weak resilience and were unable to support their own children when exposed to risk factors.

Factors that were examined within the school system by Rendall and Stuart (2005) depict that excluded pupils felt less positive in respect to teacher-pupil relations and express how they did not feel supported by their teachers. Overall, teacher-pupil relationships were described as poor. Also, they felt that teachers were unaware of the family circumstances and thus couldn't support them or understand their position and their acting out behaviour. In addition, the excluded pupils' views were less favourable in respect to the learning context of the school. Moreover, the study highlights the negative impact of inconsistencies in the application of school rules and behaviour management. As explained previously, vulnerable pupils were likely to feel more anxious and uncontained under these circumstances especially where there are no clear and consistent rules in the school environment.

Apart from this ground breaking study, other projects also researched school exclusion and valued the voice of the excluded child. Even though, the majority of these did not apply a systemic model of inquiry, similar to Rendall and Stuart (2005), they also determined the importance of gaining pupils' perceptions around some of

these aspects as central in their methodology. These additional studies explored such aspects as school issues, and or family circumstances, and or pupils' personal strengths and supported the conclusions of Rendall and Stuart.

Researchers that collected pupils' voices on school exclusion (i.e. Hayden & Dunne, 2001; Hilton, 2006; Munn & Lloyd, 2005) highlighted the breakdown of relationships between teachers and pupils. The most consistent underlying theme that emerged from Hilton's (2006) research was the failure of relationships between teachers and pupils. Her research project consisted of 40 extended, individual semi-structured interviews with young people with a range of experiences of disruptive behaviour, truancy and school exclusion, including pupils of both genders and across a range of ages. Most pupils participating in her study explained that teachers had failed to engage with them or show any real care or concern about their experiences. The majority expressed a belief that they had been targeted, judged, labelled, or even picked on sometimes because of their siblings' poor behaviour and prematurely given up on by their teachers. Hilton (2006) suggests that for many pupils "their sense of resentment about how they had been treated at school by teachers had served to exacerbate their anger and disruptive influence" (p. 304).

Likewise, a series of three separate projects⁴ conducted and presented by Munn and Lloyd (2005) also focused on listening to the voices of excluded pupils. These studies demonstrated how the majority of pupils expressed similar views about their

⁴ Project 1: a large-scale study of exclusion, interview with pupils was a minor but important part of the research (Munn, P., Lloyd, G. & Cullen, M.A., 2000). Project 2: a project on inter-agency working in preventing school exclusion, pupils interviewed at home or in community settings (Lloyd, G., Stead, J. & Kendrick, A., 2001). Project 3: a consultation project, sought the views of young people in residential and secure care about their education (Lloyd, G. & Peacock, L., 2001).

relationships with their teachers including general disappointment regarding the association to their teachers. Specifically, these pupils expressed a sense of being singled out, not being a valued member of the school community and not listened to by their teachers. This study highlighted these pupils' need to be seen as equal human beings in the eyes of their teachers and to receive respect from them, which was sometimes disregarded by their teachers.

Excluded pupils often expressed a sense of unfairness to exclusion; especially when comparing themselves to others, for example, other pupils behaved in similar ways and yet managed to avoid exclusion (Gordon, 2001; Hayden & Dunne, 2001; Munn & Lloyd, 2005). Hayden and Dunne (2001) exploring the views and experiences of excluded children and their families, pointed out that pupils' attributions on fairness or unfairness of their exclusion had an immediate impact on their feelings about being excluded. The authors explained that pupils' feelings were dependent on whether they thought their exclusion was fair or just. For example, pupils felt angry when they thought their exclusion was unwarranted.

Another valuable study completed by Munn, Lloyd and Cullen (2000) involved a number of interviews with a group of eleven young pupils who had a history of being in trouble in school and out of school and had experienced school exclusion. Rather interestingly, Munn, Lloyd and Cullen (2000) pointed out that even though some pupils felt they had been treated unfairly by school, they tended to accept and take responsibility for their actions. While there appeared to be evidence of conflicted perspectives some students expressed a view that their exclusion had been unfair, while others accepted they had behaved inappropriately and warranted some form of

exclusion. In addition, the same authors state that excluded pupils often expressed a sense of injustice, partly because their own description of the incident which had led directly to their exclusion had never been heard.

Alternatively, Munn, Lloyd and Cullen (2000) claim that excluded pupils, at least in part, showed attribution to self by taking responsibility for the actions that led to their exclusion. On the other hand, Rendall and Stuart's (2005) found that the excluded pupils participating in their study blamed their exclusion and difficulties entirely upon things beyond their control, showing an external attribution style. One possible explanation for these differences is the first study only interviewed pupils who had experienced a series of exclusions, but not a permanent exclusion, whereas the latter study focused on interviewing pupils who had been permanently excluded.

Hence, there is some indication that students who were not permanently excluded seemed to have a more internal attribution style. They were more likely to accept some responsibility for what had occurred, in contrast to those students who were permanently excluded who seemed only to exhibit an external attribution style, blaming others for their behavioural difficulties. Perhaps, pupils who have been removed from mainstream setting display different characteristics from those who are still in the mainstream school or it may be the case that permanently excluded pupils have different attribution style because they have been excluded from their school. In other words, these differences in attribution may well be a consequence of either not yet having been permanently excluded and having been permanently excluded. The event itself may well have had an impact on the ways in which the pupils attribute responsibility to what has occurred.

Hayden and Dunne (2001) and Hilton (2006) emphasise the difficulties these pupils usually experience with school work. A key finding made by Gross and McChrystal (2001) was the high rate of significant literacy and numeracy difficulties in their participation sample. It was composed of children with Statements of SEN, either because of emotional behaviour difficulties only, or learning difficulties only or a combination of both. All participating pupils were permanently excluded from mainstream school. Their outcomes revealed how these pupils had substantial learning difficulties in addition to significant emotional and behavioural difficulties. The researchers presented these profound weaknesses in the provision made for these young pupils and further argued that “throwing money at the problem does not seem to be the answer” (p. 358) and questioned the implementation of the recommendations suggested in pupils statement of SEN. Money could be helpful in addressing those pupils needs, but it did not appear to be useful through statementing.

Despite the fact there are a number of excluded pupils whose needs have been identified and have a statement of SEN; their needs are still not met in the mainstream setting. Indeed, a large number of those students who are excluded expressed negative feelings about their learning experiences. Pupils in this situation have difficulties in accessing learning and often express the feeling of being unsupported in the mainstream classroom. Hilton (2006) argued how this situation is sometimes related to large class sizes and the pupil-teacher ratios.

Furthermore, research evidence shows that pupils tend to be reluctant to attend classes in subjects which they consider difficult or boring (O’Keeffe, 1994). Solomon and Rogers (2001) completed a small-scale study investigating pupils’ perceptions of the circumstances that resulted in their exclusion and transfer to a Pupil Referral Unit (PRU). Based on their data, they argued that student’s experiences of learning difficulties and the lack of support could be significant reasons for a pupil deciding whether or not to attend a class in school or to disrupt the lesson and challenge others with their behaviour. In addition, Solomon and Rogers (2001) also found that disruptive behaviour could be reduced in subjects where teachers showed patience, understanding, justice, respect, humour and informality.

A review of the relevant literature, specifically in the area of school effectiveness, describes how positive qualities that teachers may utilise in the classroom are often acknowledged and appreciated by pupils. For example, teachers who take time to talk with and listen to ‘troubled’ students (Cooper, 1992; Nieto, 1994), teachers who are able to understand and relate to them (Gannaway, 1984; Howe, 1995; SooHoo, 1993), teachers with a friendly approach and demonstrate a sense of humour (Chaplain, 1996; Gannaway, 1984; Garner, 1995), teachers who have the ability to educate and make an effort to teach in an interesting and effective manner (Nieto, 1994; Wallace, 1996; White & Brockington, 1983). However, teachers often do not engage in these activities for a range of reasons, for example often their priority is the delivery of the curriculum or because of class size constraints.

On occasions where pupils are asked to explain their relationships with their teachers, they often tend to describe ‘bad’ and ‘good’ teachers (i.e. Munn, Lloyd &

Cullen, 2000). They are consistent in describing 'bad' teachers as those who shout and threaten; and 'good' teachers as those who are more relaxed in interpersonal relations, who listen and talk to them and who take time to explain the work. Good teachers are also sometimes described as strict, but only in relation to insisting that pupils are at school to work.

Hilton (2006) in her exploration of pupils' views found that they not only had to deal with their poor relations with their teachers, but also how they often have to deal with peer related difficulties. Specifically, excluded pupils tended to experience difficulties in their relationships with other pupils. They would get into fights and conflicts, be bullied by their peers or at times become almost completely withdraw from school and become isolated from their peers.

Students, who frequently exhibit challenging behaviour and are at risk of exclusion, may have a vulnerability in peer relationships and possess less ability to access and maintain social networks that are supportive. This perspective was initially raised by Cullingford and Morrison (1997) and also by Lown (2005). This assumption is based on a model proposed by Khan (2003) when describing the adult-child relationship vulnerability for excluded pupils in PRUs. According to this model, long-established negative pupil-teacher relationships contribute to disaffection and poor relationships between peers (cited in Lown, 2005). According to this model the same students that have difficulties relating to teachers may also be vulnerable in their peer relationships. Long-established negative peer relations may eventually contribute to disaffection, either in the form of regular conflicts and fights with peers or in the form of their withdrawal from the peer group.

Most significantly, researchers that collected pupils' voices on school exclusion also investigated the factors that relate to the family system. These studies report stress, strain and feelings of helplessness on the part of families that are often trying to cope with a number of disadvantages including poverty, ill-health and inadequate housing (Hayden & Dunne, 2001; Munn & Lloyd, 2005; Munn, Lloyd & Cullen, 2000). Indeed, a common finding is the fact that excluded pupils tend to come from troubled families. Similar findings were also presented by Rendall and Stuart (2005) who explored the family system of those excluded pupils. Pupils are often experiencing problems at home, for example many of the pupils in the Munn and Lloyd study (2005) had parents/carers who were addicted to drugs or witnessed or experienced domestic violence or otherwise lived very stressful lives. Some felt the school should understand the difficulties in their lives outside school, but, quite often these difficulties were not communicated with the school. In fact, research evidence shows poor communication between the school and the families of those pupils (Gordon, 2001; Hayden & Dunne, 2001; Rendall & Stuart, 2005).

In spite of their own negative experiences in school and the fact they have been excluded, most pupils do value schooling and education. Pupils say that want to do well and regret the fact they had 'skived' or 'mucked about' (Cohen et al, 1994; Hayden, 1997; Munn & Lloyd, 2005). It is also well-documented how the vast majority of such young people do wish to learn and succeed in school (Lloyd-Smith, 1984; Rudduck et al., 1996; de Pear, 1997). Pomeroy (2000b) interviewed 31 permanently excluded students and the overwhelmingly consistent view expressed by these students was that education is to be valued and academic success is

desirable. The author argued this finding was surprising considering they had all very negative experiences in school. Furthermore, some of these students mentioned the importance of education for general skill acquisition which would help them in their future lives.

2.5 Rationale for the Present Study

Pupils' vital contributions in the debate on school exclusion have been emphasised throughout this chapter. It has been suggested that an in-depth investigation of excluded pupils' narratives of their experiences of exclusion that led to their exclusion would provide a better insight into the exclusion process and enabled an enhanced understanding of what makes exclusion more or less likely.

Indeed, this study valued the voice of the excluded pupil and the voice of students who managed to avoid permanent exclusion. Consequently, the main tool to obtain and investigate their narratives was through the use of interviews. This study suggests that interviewing and collecting evidence on excluded pupils' experiences will generate an insight into why and how exclusion is occurring. However, in order to understand why and how exclusion may be avoided, this study argued that it is critical to unearth the differences between excluded pupils' narratives and those of pupils at the greatest risk of permanent exclusion who have avoided it and appear likely to continue to do so.

In addition to this, differences in attitudes between the two groups of pupils were also explored with the use of a questionnaire. More specifically, quantitative data were collected about pupils' attitudes to self and school. This questionnaire, which was used as a triangulating instrument, aimed to explore how far attitudes differed between the two groups in ways that corresponded with their accounts during the interviews. The purpose of using quantitative and qualitative methods in this project was mainly to provide a richer and refined picture of the phenomenon of school exclusion, as well as a means of data triangulation.

The fundamental research project of Rendall and Stuart (2005) presented previously was useful in describing the need to establish comparison groups. However, besides their comparison between general non-excluded pupils and excluded pupils there is also the need for a study that examines the difference between permanently excluded pupils and those who display emotional, behavioural difficulties and have avoided exclusion. Therefore this study suggests that in order to gain information on what really helps pupils to avoid school exclusion, comparisons between a group of permanently excluded pupils and a group of those pupils who were at risk of permanent exclusion who have avoided it, seems to be essential to unearth the differences in their narratives. Therefore, these two groups of pupils composed the sample of this research project.

Most importantly previous research of Hayden and Dunne, 2001; Munn and Lloyd, 2005; Rendall and Stuart, 2005, highlight the need to study school exclusion from a systemic and interactionist perspective. These studies were critical in acknowledging the importance of interactions between systems (i.e. school, family and child) and

the impact these factors have on the excluded pupil. Therefore, this study considered such evidence and aimed to apply the principles of systemic thinking and of an interactionist approach to investigate excluded pupils' perspectives of the systems that have facilitated or ameliorated the likelihood of exclusion.

Four research questions are considered in this project. (1) What factors do pupils highlight as risk factors / support factors related to the school system? (2) What factors do pupils highlight as risk factors / support factors related to the family system? (3) What factors do pupils highlight as risk factors / support factors that relate to themselves and their behaviour? (4) What differences in perceptions of self, family and school can be found between the two groups?

The research methodology utilised in this research project is presented in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This study was comprised of a sample of thirteen pupils and has adopted a mixed research methodology, combining qualitative and quantitative approaches. In data collection, semi-structured interviews were used to explore young pupils' views and personal experiences on school exclusion. Additionally, some quantitative data was gathered with the use of a questionnaire.

3.2 Mixed Research Methodology

A combination of qualitative and quantitative tools was used to gather information for the purposes of this project. One of the major benefits of applying mixed-method design is to obtain *complementary data expansion*, namely to clarify and illustrate results from one method with the use of another method (Greene et al., 1989). In this case, data collected with the use of a questionnaire aimed to add information and provide a richness and detail to the data collected in interviews, as well as a means to establish data triangulation and thereby increasing the credibility and validity of the results presented.

As previously noted, a major objective in conducting this project is to value the voice of young people. This project intends to develop understandings of the phenomenon of school exclusion based on pupils' perceptions itself, by investigating their views in

depth. Therefore, the central tool used in data collection was semi-structured interviews.

Indeed, the generation of qualitative data can provide details on the perceptions of the participants, but this information needs to be seen against the backdrop of the broader attitudes to and perceptions of school, which can be provided by the quantitative data collected in this project. For this reason, a questionnaire was used to accumulate information on pupils' attitudes to school and self. With the use of this questionnaire the researcher aimed to explore the differences in attitudes to self and school and in particular between the two groups who composed the sample of this project.

3.3 Sample

The participant sample for this project consisted of pupils from three secondary education settings, two out of school settings (EOTAS) and one mainstream secondary school. The total number of participants was thirteen. These three settings are based in an out of the London authority and more specifically, are based in the area of this authority where the researcher was working in the role of a trainee Educational Psychologist (TEP).

Two groups of pupils were selected for the purposes of this study. Group One was comprised of pupils who had been excluded permanently and had been referred to an out of school provision. While Group Two was comprised of pupils who had been

identified as being 'at the greatest risk' of permanent exclusion, but had managed to avoid exclusion and were still educated in a mainstream secondary school.

The study included seven pupils from Group One and six pupils from Group Two, making up a total sample size of 13 pupils (N=13). The age of the participants ranged from 13 years 0 months to 14 years 9 months (Group One: 14 years 3 months to 14 years 9 months; Group Two: 13 years 0 months to 14 years 5 months). There is a slight discrepancy between the two groups in terms of age range. Initially, this study was interested in collecting data from pupils who were in Year 9 only. However, this did not appear to be possible when the researcher approached the mainstream school to select the second group of pupils. It was explained by staff at the school there were only a few pupils who were at risk of permanent exclusion in Year 9 who were still receiving education in the mainstream setting (n=2). The rest of these students were either excluded or transferred to other settings as a result of their MM. Therefore, pupils in Year 8 were identified and eventually the majority of these pupils were assembled into Group Two.

The majority of the sample was male (8 out of 13 participants), reflecting the fact that boys appeared to dominate the exclusion numbers (Group One: 4 boys, 3 girls; Group Two: 4 boys, 2 girls). According to the national data (DCSF, 2006/07), the ratio of exclusion between boys and girls has remained stable over the last five years, with boys representing around 80 per cent of the total number of permanent exclusions. Seventy-five per cent of all fixed period exclusions each year are male, which equates that boys are nearly three to four times more likely to get excluded than girls (DCSF, 2006/07). Therefore the number of girls to boys in this particular

sample is a relatively high (5 out of 13 were girls) when compared to the national average. In this study the number of girls' was almost 40 per cent of the total sample of pupils participating, rather than the 20 to 25 per cent depicted in national statistics.

In the final sample of 13 none of the participants were from any ethnic minority though one participant in the first group was from a mixed ethnic background. There was one 'looked after' child in the sample, who was part of Group Two. The final composition of the sample is illustrated in the following Table.

Table 3. 1 Description of Sample

Description of Sample (N=13)

Participants	Overall (13) (%)	Group 1 (7) (%)	Group 2 (6) (%)
Gender:			
Boys	8 (61.5)	4 (57.1)	4 (66.4)
Girls	5 (38.5)	3 (42.9)	2 (33.3)
Year Group:			
Year 8	4 (30.8)	- (0.0)	4 (66.7)
Year 9	9 (69.2)	7 (100.0)	2 (33.3)

All schools and out of school settings located in the target area were asked whether they would agree to participate in this project. A letter was sent to the Head Teachers (HT) and Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCOs). The purpose and the procedure of the project were explained in this letter; a copy of which can be found in the Appendix 2. In this first attempt, the researcher invited

pupils, as well as their teachers to participate in this project so that protective factors could be identified by pupils and teachers perspective. Teacher data were always seen as secondary, as the current research project was primarily designed to give a voice to the most disaffected children who had experienced exclusion. Due to the inevitable time constraints associated with this project and the difficulty of finding willing recruits the researcher made the decision to terminate this process and to focus solely on the data generated from the students.

Overall, seven mainstream secondary schools and three out of school settings were included in this phase. Even though, all three out of school settings volunteered to take part in the project, only one mainstream secondary school agreed to participate.

In the next phase of sample identification, meetings were conducted with the schools and out of school settings that had agreed to participate in the research. During these meetings, the researcher worked closely with members of school staff to identify and invite pupils who met the criteria to participate. For the purpose of this sample selection, information on pupils' school life, and school exclusion incidents was provided by school staff.

As mentioned previously, there were two groups of participants. Pupils who have been excluded permanently composed Group One and pupils who were 'at risk' composed Group Two. The selection of the first group was based on one main principle, whereas the selection of the second group of participants was based on a number of established criteria.

In Group One any Year 9 pupil who was educated in the three participating out of school settings and had been referred to this provision because of having displayed emotional, behaviour difficulties was eligible to take part. Any Year 9 pupil who was educated in the setting due to medical reasons was not eligible to participate in this project. Thus, the criterion set for the composition of this group was pupils who had been permanently excluded or on a MM into a setting other than mainstream school because of emotional, behavioural difficulties. From a total of twenty-five pupils, only seven pupils had parental permission to participate. These seven pupils were educated in two out of the three out of school settings which initially volunteered to participate.

To obtain participants for Group Two the secondary school was asked to identify pupils who had been 'at the greatest risk' of permanent exclusion, but for whom this has been avoided. The criteria set for inclusion in this group were: pupils in Year 8 and 9 (Key Stage 3) who had experienced either fixed term exclusion or lunch break exclusion who currently followed a Pastoral Support Programme⁵ (PSP) with success and had not been excluded for at least a term. During the meeting with school staff, detailed information was obtained from the pupils' PSP Co-ordinator regarding their progress and their perception that permanent exclusion had been avoided.

For Group One, letters were sent to the parents of pupils who were considered eligible to compose this group, seeking their permission for their son/daughter to

⁵ Government guidelines recommend that a PSP "should be automatically set up for a pupil who has had several fixed period exclusions that may lead to a permanent exclusion or has been otherwise identified as being 'at risk' of failure at school through disaffection" (DfEE, 1999).

take part in this project. A copy of the letter can be found in Appendix 3. Parents were asked to send their response in a stamped addressed envelope. However, because of the limited number of responses, the researcher personally contacted parents by phone to obtain their permission.

After identifying possible pupils for Group Two, the same letter was sent to parents to obtain parental permission. All six pupils' parents, who had been initially identified, gave permission for their son/daughter to participate in the current project. This was in contrast to Group One, where more than half the parents initially asked to give their consent actively declined permission for their son or daughter to take part.

It needs to be acknowledged that the voices of pupils whose parents did not give their consent, for whatever reason, were not heard. In particular, this was the case in the selection of the participant sample that composed Group One. It could be argued that to some extent the sample 'selected' itself. Ethical considerations left little option here as pupils whose parents refused to give permission were not eligible to participate in the current study.

In general, excluded pupils are a difficult group of pupils to establish contact for a variety of reasons i.e. coming from hard to reach families with a disadvantaged background which appears to represent the school's 'failure'. Thus, it was not easy to get these volunteers to participate in this study.

3.4 Ethical Issues

This project commenced after the research proposal was approved by the Department of Psychology and Human Development in the Institute of Education University of London and the ethical approval was ensured to be in line with the British Psychological Society (BPS) guidelines. All procedures in this research conformed to the ethical code of practice produced by the BPS.

Once permission for conducting the research was granted, both information sheets and consent forms were prepared in order to access the sample. This process ensured that schools and parents of the participants were informed about the research aims and the data collection procedure and ensured their anonymity and confidentiality. Copies of which can be found in the Appendices (Appendix 4: Information Sheet given to Pupils; Appendix 5: Consent Form).

Concepts such as anonymity and confidentiality were fully explained to each of the participants. They were reassured that personal details would not be published and their answers would be used only for the purposes of this specific study. For this reason and for analytic purposes, each school was identified using numbers and each pupil was given a pseudonym. Participants also gave their consent to be tape recorded during the interview and had the right to listen to any recording made of them during the interview. Furthermore, at the commencement of this study it made clear to each participant how they had the right to withdraw their interview data at any point up to the writing stage of this dissertation. Prior to the interview stage, all participants were asked whether they would like to participate in the project and a

consent form was given to them to sign. Only when participants agreed to take part in the study the process of data collection commenced.

From the onset of the research, it was crucial to explain the role of the researcher. The fact the researcher was part of the local Educational Psychologist Service (EPS); data would only be collected for the purpose of this project was clarified. Despite the fact the researcher was a practitioner TEP in the area; she was only involved with those pupils for the data collection of this study. Participants were ensured that any information conveyed by them to the researcher would not be shared with the school and or parents.

From the onset of the research, all pupils, parents, school staff were informed that taking part in the present study would not help to reverse the decision to exclude nor to receive any other form of support. Only if there were pressing needs, for instance child protection issues, would such participants be referred on to appropriate agencies.

3.5 Data Collection Tools

3.5.1. Interview

The research questions demanded in-depth responses from the participants as one of the aims of this research was to listen carefully to the young people themselves; Kvale (1996) defined an interview as "an inter change of views between two persons conversing about a theme of mutual interest" (p. 2). This project was interested in

collecting young people's views and personal experiences on school exclusion and this could only be "captured through face-to-face interaction" (Marshall & Rossman, 2006, p. 53).

Semi-structured interviews were used in this study as this is a flexible and adaptable approach and therefore the most appropriate for the purposes of this project. In this type of interview, the interviewer can change the wording and sequence of the questions, follow up the interviewee's answers, probe and ask for clarification or more detail of new aspects on a topic that arise through discussion (Kvale, 1996).

Furthermore, the use of a semi-structured interview framework with open-ended questions allows and encourages people to give their own accounts in their own words, presenting what is important to them and articulating this in such ways that are authentic and meaningful to them (Fielding, 2001).

a. Interview Schedule

The interview schedule was designed to allow pupils to tell their own stories, rather than adhere to a strict structure. It was developed with open-ended questions and prompts, in order to elicit a breadth and depth in responses (Breakwell, 1995, cited in Kitzinger & Willmott, 2002).

The interview schedule prepared for the purposes of this study was used with all participants, both groups of pupils, permanently excluded and at risk to permanent

exclusion students. All pupils who took part in this project were asked to recount their experiences of exclusion, either permanent or fixed period exclusions.

The questions included in the interview schedule were carefully formed; short, clear and non-leading questions (Kvale, 1996). The design of the interview schedule was driven by the research questions which this study aimed to address. From the literature, three main themes were identified and research questions were developed with the aim of exploring those three themes in more depth: factors related to school, factors related to family, and factors related to pupils themselves.

The questions included in the interview schedule were divided into four parts. The first three parts related to school, family, pupil and the final section included an open question regarding the incident of exclusion. This series of four parts included in the schedule, reflected a serious consideration of the impact these questions might have on pupils' emotional state and thus, on their narratives. The possibility that pupils could become overwhelmed when discussing exclusion itself was taken into account and therefore the subject of the exclusion itself was postponed until the end of the interview. More 'easy to chat about' topics such as the school situation was explored first, for example their peer relations and their relationship with teachers, as well as issues around their learning. The aim was to establish good rapport during this first phase of the interview, before moving on to more 'difficult to explore' issues such as the pupils' home situation, their family relations and their own personal attributions/ideas. At the conclusion of the interview, the researcher asked pupils to narrate their personal incident of exclusion, aiming to capture their feelings, emotions and thoughts around this difficult event.

Figure 3. 1 The Interview Schedule

Pseudonym:

Research Group:

A. School Experiences

Try going back in time, just before being excluded from school:

Please describe for me how things were at school with your teachers (favourite, less favourite teacher).

Please describe for me how things were with your peers/friends (who do you usually hang around with, what do you usually do)

Please describe for me how the situation was in your classroom i.e. difficulties you may have experienced, what kind of support you have received.

B. Family Experiences

Drawing a family tree together to explore pupil's family structure.

Try going back in time, just before being excluded from school:

Please describe me the situation at home i.e. what was happening with you and your parents/siblings; any important family events/incidents during that period.

Describe your parents' reactions to exclusion i.e. what did they say/do when you got excluded?

C. Pupil Attributions

How did you feel about your parents reactions?

How did you feel about school/teachers treatment i.e. fair, unfair?

Who do you blame for what has happened? Why?

D. Experience Exclusion

Try to remember that specific day of your exclusion. Please describe for me that day when you got excluded from school i.e. What did happen? What did happen after? How did you feel? What did you think?

What do you think are the main reasons that you have been excluded from school? What are the possible reasons that a pupil might get excluded from school?

What do you think you could do to avoid exclusion?

What do you think school/teachers needed to do to help you avoid exclusion?

The interview schedule is made up of the four topics to be included in the discussion and prompts for possible questions. Part A of the schedule includes possible questions about teacher-pupil relationships and peer relationships. Young people were requested to comment on their teachers' attitudes towards them and on their relationships with their peers. They were also asked to identify any school difficulties they may have experienced. An example question was implemented to describe how things were at school with their teachers during the period before their exclusion. Part B of the interview schedule contained questions that inquired into the family and home situation of the pupil. The participants were then asked to talk about their family background and family structure. They were also asked about their relationships with members of their family, i.e. parents, siblings, or extended family members. Another example question was implemented to describe how things were at home during the period that lead up to their exclusion. Part C of the schedule contained questions examining pupil related factors such as pupils' attributions. For example, pupils were asked how they felt they had been treated by school and whom they blamed for being excluded. The final part of the schedule requested participants to recount their personal experiences of exclusion. Also, they were asked to identify possible reasons for their school exclusion, for example, why they believed they had been excluded. In addition, pupils' views on what they could do differently to avoid exclusion were sought, as well as their thoughts on what schools could do differently to support them and other pupils who are at risk of exclusion.

As mentioned previously, the researcher did not follow a strict structure, whilst interviewing young people, but used questions with flexibility and applied a circular

model of interviewing, an approach to questioning that aims to 'make connections between meaning and behaviour' (Brown, 1997).

Circular questioning was originally introduced by the Milan Associates and was initiated in the field of family therapy (initial findings published in the article: 'Hypothesising-Circularity-Neutrality: Three Guidelines for the Conductor of the Session'). Circular questioning has been acknowledged as a useful method of discourse. This form of interviewing invites the interviewee to develop his/her capacity to 'observe'. In fact, the interviewee functions as co-examiner rather than as informant and is encouraged to develop skills as an observer of behaviour (Borwick, n.d.).

Brown (1997) recorded different types of questions involved in the circular approach to interviewing, like questions about behaviour, feelings and beliefs, relationships, and meaning. In this current project, the participants were invited to 'co-examine' and observe issues focusing on their behaviour per se, which was useful in getting a good understanding of the events that had happened; on their feelings and beliefs, which helped to increase understanding of their motivations as well as to understand underlying ideas that may have influenced the way they act; on their relationship with significant others, which gave them the opportunity to comment on the nature of their relationships with parents, teachers, peers, etc.

This circular process of interviewing meant that questions and prompts concerning pupils' attitudes, for example, were covered in questions across the whole interview. The following example taken from the interview with Taylor (Group One) illustrates

this process. Whilst discussing his relationship with teachers (Part A topic), he started describing his own behaviour at school and taking responsibility for his actions (Part C topic):

'I was all right with some teachers, other teachers... I wasn't. I don't know... I just feel like I was different from other kids, these kids really had some manners. I didn't have manners... I quite had a big mouth and I was getting into fights every single day...'

As can be seen, a 'relationship question' gave Taylor the opportunity not only to comment on the nature of the relationship he has with his teacher, but also to make new interpretations of his own behaviour. It was an opportunity for him to interpret his world through his interaction with others; making these interpretations explicit has helped him to create and present significant new understandings of his own behaviour. Indeed, this form of interviewing generates information that can be new to both the interviewee and the interviewer (Borwick, n.d.).

b. Interview Procedure

Once the identification of the sample had been finalised, visits to the settings were arranged for the interviews. All interviews were conducted face-to-face and in the settings premises, more specifically in a quiet room. The data collection was carried out over the Summer Term in 2008.

Before commencing the interview, a brief discussion took place with each of the participants to clarify the aim of the research and the topics of the interview, making it clear that the focus was on their experiences and views on school exclusion. Any misconceptions were addressed and any questions were answered. A tape recorder was then switched on and the interview commenced. Each interview lasted from 30 to 50 minutes. At the end of each interview an informal de-briefing session, that was not recorded, took place. All interviews were then transcribed and analysed by the researcher.

3.5.2. Questionnaire

Data was also collected using a questionnaire seeking information on pupils' attitudes towards school, learning, self and motivation. Specifically, all participants were asked to complete the 'Pupil's Attitudes to Self and School' (PASS) assessment. They were asked to complete this questionnaire at the end of their interview by themselves. This was done electronically with the use of a computer and took approximately 5-10 minutes.

At the beginning of the academic year the authority where this study took place had introduced this tool to all schools across the authority as a way of contributing to the tracking of vulnerable pupils and assisting in early identification of the 'at risk' pupil population. This questionnaire was also recommended for use in the current project.

This is an attitude questionnaire on nine key education related factors: (1) feelings about school; (2) perceived learning capability; (3) self-regard; (4) preparedness for learning; (5) attitudes to teachers; (6) general work ethic; (7) confidence in learning; (8) attitudes to attendance; (9) response to curriculum demands. A PASS factor summary can be found in the Appendix 6. These nine factors can be grouped into four general categories (a) School (F1, F5, F8); (b) Self (F2, F3); (c) Learning (F4, F7); and (d) Motivation (F6, F9). Overall, this assessment consists of fifty items that cluster into one or more of the above nine factors; a copy of the questionnaire can be found in the Appendix 7.

The PASS questionnaire was developed by Williams and Whittome (2002) in collaboration with Exeter, Birmingham and Aston Universities. Initial standardisation work was carried out on the pilot version of data when approximately 1500 high school pupils completed the questionnaire in 1996-97. Following the revisions to the pilot version, further survey work was carried out and more than 14,000 school age young people between the ages of 8-16 have completed the scale. The next standardisation of PASS took place between October 2000 and December 2001 and involved over 5000 young people between the ages of 11-16 and a similar number aged 7-11 (48.9% female; 51.1% male). A re-standardisation of PASS took place between September 2004 and July 2005 and involved over 40,000 pupils (52.8% female; 47.2% male) for the purposes of its new 2004-2005 release.

The PASS standardisation and re-standardisation sample was representative of the general UK population and was stratified by age, gender and ethnicity. The sample was also reflective of the overall population in terms of ability and disability.

Individual responses collected were totalled by factor and year group. The internal reliability or consistency of the PASS has also been clearly established, the calculated alpha coefficient (between total pupil scores on each form) was 0.601 ($p < 0.01$). Alpha scores for the individual factors have not been provided by the authors.

The questionnaire has an automated scoring and produces an individual profile across the above nine factors. Responses are displayed as a graph showing percentile factor scores for each of the nine areas. This type of data allows an individual's result to be compared with a standardised population i.e. the higher the percentile scores the more positive the pupil attitude / self-perception. In addition, this type of data allows comparisons between different groups of pupils, for example permanently excluded and 'at risk' pupils.

This questionnaire generally accepts the way young people feel about themselves has a major impact on their success within the educational system. The judgements and beliefs that young people have about their own capacity can affect their choice of activities, the effort they may put into these, as well as their emotional reactions and coping responses.

This tool measures school factors such as feelings about school, attitudes to teachers, response to curriculum demands; issues that have been discussed in the interview. Any profiles produced here are presented in relation to the data gathered in semi-structured interviews and used in a supplementary way to the interview data. Therefore, it is possible that pupils' profiles, together with data gathered in

interviews, would allow a more detailed examination of young pupils' perceptions of school and self and eventually may give a better understanding of school exclusion.

3.6 Data Analysis

The interview data was transcribed and analysed by the researcher – transcription samples can be found in the Appendix 10. Silverman (2005) argued that transcripts are preferable since they are open to a thorough inspection by the researcher, ensuring research reliability.

Data collected from the interviews were analysed using thematic analysis. This is a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns within data, “the analysis relies upon organising sections of the data into recurrent themes” (Campbell & Schram, 1995, cited in Kitzinger & Willmott, 2002). During the process of data analysis, Braun and Clarke's (2006) guidelines were followed. This involves a six-phase process in applying thematic analysis.

The first phase involved the researcher's familiarisation with the data itself by reading and re-reading the data searching for possible interpretations and noting down initial ideas. This phase started only after the transcription of the data has been completed by the researcher. The second phase involved coding the data. During this coding phase the researcher worked systematically through the entire set of data identifying interesting aspects, with the use of highlighters, across the data set, indicating potential patterns that could form the basis of repeated patterns, the

themes. The themes were developed from within the areas of focus of this investigation: school related factors, family related factors, child related factors.

In the third phase, all data relevant to each potential theme were gathered together and formed candidate themes and sub-themes. During this phase, visual representations were used, i.e. tables, 'post-it' notes, to help the researcher re-organise the codes into possible themes and sub-themes. At the end of this phase, the researcher created a collection of candidate themes and sub-themes with all the extracts of data that have been previously coded in relation to them.

The fourth phase involved the refinement of those themes identified in the previous phase. At this stage, a 'thematic map' was created presenting the overall 'story' the analysis tells. Then, in the fifth phase, themes were named and clearly defined, and their content was briefly described. According to Elliott et al. (1999) good qualitative research should provide, among others, evidence for checking the credibility of their categories, themes or accounts. Following the guidelines presented by Elliott et al. (1999) to encourage better quality control in qualitative research, the researcher of this project shared the potential 'thematic map' with other colleagues with extensive expertise and similar professional background to look over the analysis and the supporting data.

In the last, sixth phase of data analysis, a concise, coherent and logical account of the data was produced. This analytic narrative embeds selected, vivid extracts capturing the essence of the story of the data. This analytic narrative is presented and discussed in the next chapters.

Implementing a qualitative analysis of the data identified differences and similarities of perceptions between pupils and groups of pupils, with the aim of developing a broader and different conceptualisation of school exclusion and an understanding of the dynamics of what causes and prevents exclusion.

Finally, pupils' self-reports collected by the PASS questionnaire were also presented, exploring how far attitudes differed between the two groups in ways that corresponded with their accounts during the interviews. As noted previously, this questionnaire gave an automated scoring and produced an individual profile across the nine factors measured for each participant. The nine factors percentiles produced could be used to compare individual cases between participants; their scores are displayed in the Appendices (Appendix 10: PASS Individual Profiles).

For group comparisons, the analysis was carried out by comparing the percentile means of the two groups. Thus, descriptive statistics analysis, i.e. mean values, standard deviation values, were calculated in order to summarise data collected from this questionnaire into two groups. Additionally, statistical tests, an independent samples t-test and a Wilcoxon Test, were conducted in order to compare the overall mean values of the two groups (Group One and Group Two).

CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS AND DESCRIPTION OF FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

The purpose of conducting this research was to describe and interpret young people's experiences and perceptions of school exclusion. This chapter primarily presents the data that was generated by collected in the interviews. It is divided into three main themes which are based on the interview schedule: school experiences, family experiences, pupils' personal attributions. Some general information on the incidence of exclusion and the reasons for the participant's initial reactions to exclusion are also presented in this chapter.

In addition, at the conclusion of this chapter, pupils' self-reports collected by the administration of the PASS questionnaire are illustrated, but only those relevant to the data gathered in semi-structured interviews are discussed.

In this analysis the sample has been treated as one homogenous group, because all pupils participating have displayed emotional behavioural difficulties and experienced school exclusion at some level. Then, in addition, some comparisons were made between the Group One (permanently excluded pupils) and Group Two (at the greatest risk of permanent exclusion pupils) when these became evident from the data generated. Therefore, similarities between all participants' are described in the following sections in terms of emerging themes and sub-themes and then, any differences identified from the comparison of the two groups' narratives are presented.

4.2 Qualitative Analysis

It is important to reiterate this study's focus was to investigate school exclusion from the child's perspective. Findings presented in this chapter aim to describe young people's narratives. It concerns their personal understanding of the world, their personal attributions in events and their stories about themselves and others. Therefore, such factors as peer relations, relationship with teachers, learning difficulties, difficulties in the school or home environment are only considered from the perspective of pupils who have either been excluded permanently or have avoided permanent exclusion but do not have fixed term exclusions.

4.3 Experience of Exclusion

Prior to presenting the main findings additional background information is presented in this section. In particular, explanations are provided by the participants for their permanent or fixed term exclusions.

Almost all participants acknowledged that they were excluded, fixed term or permanently, because of behavioural reasons.

"Because of my behaviour... they just couldn't keep controlling of me basically."

(Taylor, Group One)

All of them experienced exclusion because of fighting with their peers. A few of them described having a bad temper to explain their activity.

"I've always had bad temper, always. At the time when I am angry, I think this is horrible. When I calmed down... what idiot I've been and why did I do it, just WHY did I go to that level, extreme, when I could have done it in another way. But, it's just like instinct, for me, for some reason."

(Marco, Group Two)

The majority of them also experienced exclusion because of class disruption, or being rude to teachers, for instance having arguments, swearing at them. A number of participants reported they were excluded because of truancy. One young boy from Group One, named Kyle, mentioned that he was excluded because he tended not to complete his school work. Whereas a young girl from the same group said that she was excluded once when she talked to people over the fence, *"school calls them intruders"* (Emily, Group One). The same girl was permanently excluded when she appeared to be drinking in the school setting.

Pupils explained the reasons they were excluded as not the major issue, but rather the culmination of very many, little things. Freddie, a young boy in Group One, described his experiences and gave his interpretations of what he was permanently excluded from school:

“Hmm, I think that I did just a little thing and that was my last chance. It was not just a major thing, it was lots and lots of little things really and then they just couldn’t, and they’ve decided to kick me out basically in the end, because they gave me too many chances.”

(Freddie, Group One)

This participant continued explaining school intentions to keep him in the setting and why he believes school gave him *“too many chances”*.

“I’ve always been smart. Everyone has already said that I am not that dumb. Even I was rude, I was never dumb. That’s why they kept me in so long because they knew that academically wise I was good at subjects. I was smart. I was rude as a person, but, yeah, when it comes to tests and stuff I have always tried because I knew I was good at it [...] They gave me quite a lot of chances and the reason they gave me so many chances is because I was smart. So it was worth keep me in. I could’ve done some work, class smart work.”

(Freddie, Group One)

4.4 Description of Findings

As previously mentioned, three main themes were derived from the analysis of the data collected in this study: school experiences, family experiences and pupils’ personal attributions. Their sub-themes and categories are presented in tabular form and can be found in the Appendix 8 illustrating the thematic map which was created from this data analysis. It is evident from the analysis that as movement

arises from themes to sub-themes and to categories, the descriptions become less abstract and more contextual.

The Appendices also contain another table that summarise and present the main findings generated by the pupils' interviews (Appendix 9: Thematic Map: Summary).

4.5 Theme 1: School Experiences

Participants' experiences within the school setting included descriptions of their interactions and relationships with teachers and peers and their experiences when learning. The narratives of Group One and Two appeared to be similar in respect to this theme. No differences were found between the two groups, apart from some noted differences in the level of support received from school regarding their displaying difficulties.

Table 4. 1 Thematic Map: Theme 1

Thematic Map: Theme 1 School Experiences

Theme	Sub-Theme	Sub-Theme Categories and their descriptors
School Experiences	Experiences with Teachers	Attribution of Negative Qualities to Teachers These included: negative relationship (shouting, no respect); poor communication (not listening); negative attitudes (i.e. pick them on, provoke them); different treatment (sense of worthiness).
		Attribution of Positive Qualities to Teachers These included: positive relationship (understanding); good communication (good listening); teaching qualities.
		Teachers Inconsistent Practice These included the existence of two types of teachers, soft and strict, particularly on matters of discipline.
	Learning Experiences	Difficulties Accessing Learning These included: literacy difficulties; concentration problems; limited attention skills; hearing problems.
		Support for Accessing Learning These included support provided by school and individual teachers i.e. given extra work; visual, practical aids; learning mentor; special behavioural arrangements.
	Experiences with Peers	Peer Relations These included negative peer relations, i.e. fighting, bullying, and the type of these peer relations (e.g. with older people).
		School Life Events affecting Peer Relations These included: school change, and secondary school transition.

4.5.1. *Experiences with Teachers*

The pupils' narratives revealed evidence of the existence of both 'good' and 'bad' relations with teachers. Pupils frequently related their negative school experiences to their negative relationships with teachers. By contrast, pupils also described the qualities of a good teacher. As previously stated, generally excluded and at risk pupils narratives were similar with no noted differences regarding their experiences with teachers.

The Attribution of Negative Qualities to Teachers

In this sub-section, pupils' negative experiences with their teachers are described. Both groups of pupils gave evidence describing their teachers' negative behaviour and poor attitudes towards them. In fact, all participants in this study described their relationship with their teachers as negative, for example shouting, not being listened to and the lack of respect. Pupils described teachers who used to treat them 'badly' by coming up close and screaming at them, or scrambling up their work or showing no respect.

Some participants maintained how their teachers' attitudes tended to be negative towards them in particular. The following quotes illustrate pupil's perceptions of some teachers treating them differently simply because they "*didn't like*" them.

"If something was happening, someone shouted or made a noise, most of the time, quite a lot of the time, it would be straight to me or one of the other people in the class who they don't like so much."

(Jordan, Group One)

"There were some teachers basically they provoked me, they just wanted to see me angry, because they didn't like me."

(Freddie, Group One)

"I think they were just like "we don't like this person, so we don't really want him, so we are not gonna treat him as good as we treat other people."

(Antonio, Group Two)

Pupils further explained how these negative attitudes towards them often made them feel left out, get upset, annoyed and consequently have a negative impact on the behaviour.

"They used to treat me differently [...] send me do some really hard work that I haven't done before... they were treating me harsh [...] I felt like really annoyed with them..."

(Antonio, Group Two)

"They just make me sit down all the time when other people are standing up. They pick me more. They annoy me.... I just walk away while they talk to me. I swear to them."

(Owen, Group Two)

"She made me put by myself when she let everyone else to sit near their friends. And I was just felt left out."

(Stephanie, Group One)

Some pupils expressed the feeling there were teachers who ignored them, or, teachers who didn't want them at school. Participants explained that some teachers tended to develop a sense of 'worthiness' deciding whether it was worth to 'invest' in them and their education.

"She only bothered with like the geeky people, no offence to them, but that's what she bothered with. We were sitting there. She just ignored us, walked by us and left us. And it was like three quarters of the class was sitting down doing nothing and then it was like her class was consisted by three people and no one else so I don't feel that was very fair..."

(Maggie, Group Two)

When pupils were asked to provide possible explanations for their teachers' negative attitude, possibly based on unconstructive past experiences, no information was forth coming. Pupils appeared to treat this type of relation as a fixed state of affairs and take a more passive attitude in relation to negative teachers' behaviour for the most part, but less so in connection with positive teacher behaviours discussed in the next sub-section. Moreover, pupils seemed to perceive the teachers' negative behaviour towards them as a fixed character trait that these teachers had rather than something that may be more circumstantial.

The Attribution of Positive Qualities to Teachers

All pupils, in both groups, reported that during their school life they had come across a few 'good' teachers. Pupils described the qualities of a 'good' teacher based on their past experiences, presenting a list of characteristics that a teacher should have. The qualities included. staying calm, not shouting at them, understanding them and

caring about them, supporting them to stay out of trouble, treating everyone equally, making lessons interesting, valuing education and possessing a sense of humour. Here are some extracts that illustrate the personal qualities of some 'good' teachers.

"She is really calm. She doesn't shout at us. She is the teacher that I would prefer to have in all my lessons."

(Brooke, Group Two)

"In primary, teachers were brilliant, they did everything to help me. They treated everyone equally."

(Antonio, Group Two)

"He tries to help me, to keep me out of trouble."

(Cole, Group Two)

"Every bit of education we learn is more interesting. He wouldn't shout at you, wouldn't tell you off, he gives you a second chance when you do something wrong. He is a really good teacher. And we learnt a lot more... Yeah, I was enjoying his class. And they got some sense of humour too. They are teachers who care about pupils, who know that pupils need education to get a better life."

(Taylor, Group One)

Most of the pupils described their teachers' positive attitude as having a positive impact on their behaviour. A young boy describes his willingness to behave well when one of his 'good' teachers came into class.

“Some teachers understood why I get angry sometimes [...] If they know that I’m gonna get angry, if it was that type of teacher, then I just sit in the classroom and do whatever they tell me to do because I would respect them more. If I liked the teacher, I would sit down and do my work. As if I didn’t, I wouldn’t do my work.”

(Freddie, Group One)

Teachers’ Inconsistent Practice

Pupils from both groups described the existence of two types of teachers, with a particular focus on matters of discipline. They separated teachers into ‘soft and strict’. Pupils’ stories indicated the differences in their treatment when it came to behaviour issues provided by individual teachers. The following quote describes this inconsistency in teachers’ practice.

“Some teachers don’t approve doing certain things, and others teachers do. It depends on teachers really. If you are with a strict teacher and you are messing around, you will probably get suspended. With other teacher, sort of low profile, like some soft teachers at school, they don’t say anything and will take it as a joke whereas other teachers will think you are rude and probably get suspended.”

(Ashley, Group One)

Pupils participating in this study described how the consequences of their actions depended on which teacher was involved. For instance, ‘soft’ teachers would have ignored a disruptive behaviour or they could have considered it as part of a joke and laughed, whereas, when a ‘strict’ teacher was involved, the same behaviour would have been considered as inappropriate and pupils would be punished.

4.5.2. Learning Experiences

In this section, pupils' describe their difficulties accessing learning and support. In this situation some differences were apparent between the two groups' narratives, specifically regarding the amount of support provided by school and or by individual teachers.

Difficulties Accessing Learning

Difficulties accessing learning refers to descriptions provided by participants of being unable to access the curriculum due to specific literacy difficulties. The extent to which the students actually experienced these difficulties was not reported however, what was apparent from the interview data is how the students did not consider themselves to have been sufficiently supported by school. Both groups of pupils described difficulties accessing learning within the classroom context. This included specific problems with reading and writing, limited attention skills, poor concentration. In addition, one girl mentioned that she was experiencing hearing problems. The following quotes describe some of these difficulties.

"I have some really bad, bad problems with my writing."

(Taylor, Group One)

"I don't concentrate. I need more explaining to be done, just more simple, do this, do that, just how to do it."

(Owen, Group Two)

In fact only one participant felt that he was not experiencing any kind of difficulties accessing learning. Similarly, Freddie, Group One as quoted earlier, explained how the school appeared to give him more chances because of his good academic skills.

Some pupils described how their difficulties in accessing learning contributed to their emotional and behavioural difficulties. For example, they explained how their learning difficulties sometimes made them feel annoyed and upset, or left out, which often resulted in disruptive behaviour in the classroom. Thus, triggering a chain of events that seemed to exacerbate their learning difficulties and hinder their educational progress by not engaging with the curriculum.

Support for Accessing Learning

This section reports on the type of support provided by the school and individual teachers access the curriculum. In relation to this situation some differences between the two groups were apparent in pupils' narratives.

As described earlier, both groups of pupils reported experiencing learning difficulties that were occasionally linked to emotional and behavioural problems. However, there were pupils from the second group that mentioned receiving some support to meet these needs. In contrast, the majority of the Group One pupils described receiving no such support.

In particular, the majority of Group One students felt that school could not understand the nature of their difficulties and therefore they did not receive support from school. For example, Taylor who was quoted earlier describing his difficulties with writing, mentioned that he only received help when he moved to the out of school setting. In other words, after he had been permanently excluded.

“I have some really bad, really bad problems with my writing. They sort a solution out here. They gave me a special pen to write with. At school they said that I was perfectly fine, I was just lazy... they just said that I couldn't be bothered and I was lazy.”

(Taylor, Group One)

In contrast, the majority of Group Two pupils described receiving some sort of in-classroom support to access learning; support that was mostly provided by individual teachers. For example, extra work, visual and or practical aids and support from learning mentors. The following participant describes the kind of support provided by her science teacher that helped her access learning.

“I got really low grades in science, but then our teacher made out as much as she could, giving extra work, vision booklets that really helped [...] she also made the lesson more practical, put DVDs on, that made it easier for me to follow.”

(Brooke, Group Two)

Furthermore, a number of Group Two pupils reported that some special arrangements were organised by the school management team to meet their emotional and behaviour difficulties in order to minimise their disruptive behaviour.

For instance, 'exit card' (i.e. permission to leave class when upset), attending anger management groups and on one occasion, the school liaising with external professionals.

"They gave me an exit card so I can walk out from a lesson. I walk away and just stay out of the lesson for a bit to relax."

(Owen, Group Two)

The information presented here illustrates the discrepancy between the two groups of pupils in relation to the support provided from school to meet their needs. Group One pupils, in the majority, felt disappointed and annoyed as the school apparently could not understand the nature of their learning difficulties and they describe receiving no support to meet their needs. This lack of support appeared to exacerbate their behaviour difficulties. In contrast, Group Two pupils experienced a level greater of support from the school and individual teachers, who aimed to meet their individual learning requirements and also address their emotional and behavioural needs.

4.5.3. Experiences with Peers

This section describes how pupils' relationships with their peers impacted upon them. Critical school life events, such as the transition to secondary school, change of school setting were identified as affecting the pupils' peer relationships. Overall, similar stories were collected from both groups of pupils regarding their experiences.

The point should also be made that most likely there is a reciprocal relationship between critical life events and peer relationships as one appears to effect the other. For instance school life critical events, such as transition to secondary school, may cause poor and or negative peer relations, while lack of peer relations may exacerbate students' adjustment difficulties during these critical periods of school life.

Peer Relations

Most pupils described their peer relations as poor or in negative light, for instance, fighting, bullying, being rejected are frequently reported The following incident describes the bullying of one such participant.

"There were a couple of people that used to pick on me. I was always picked on because of my weight, my appearance."

(Brooke, Group Two)

More than half of the total of the pupils participating said they had been involved in fights with their peers, while almost half of them said they have been bullied by their peer group. A number said they used to hang around with older people a lot whereas a couple of pupils reported how they have been a gang member in the past.

In contrast, only a few participants expressed having a good or positive relationship with their peers.

School Life Events affecting Peer Relations

There was evidence that indicated how critical periods in the pupils' school life may have negatively impacted upon their peer relationships. Based upon their stories, it transpired that periods such as transition to secondary school and school setting change, were critical regarding their peer relationships.

For a number of pupils, their transition from primary to secondary school was a difficult period in their school life, specifically because of their peers. Pupils explained how they had “*hard time*” from their older peers when they first moved to secondary school and how they needed time to adjust to the new setting.

“I was young. I got from being the oldest in my junior, to being the youngest in my other school. And then because I was the youngest obviously... people try picking on the youngest people, so I get a lot of picking on and I had to stick up for myself, which was frustrating.”

(Freddie, Group One)

In addition, participants described how changing schools during the middle of the academic year generated even more difficulty and anxiety. Even though this school change was often a family decision, pupils appeared to experience a lack of social skills, difficulties in choosing peer group to join and difficulties in developing new relationships with other people.

“It’s hard moving around (change settings) all the time, when you are older in secondary school its harder to get new friends, cause you get closer in secondary school than in primary school [...] I think I’ve picked the group of wrong people

because I was like I've picked the naughty people because that's easy for you to fit in with..."

(Maggie, Group Two)

On the whole, pupils participating in this study emphasised their difficulties in developing relationships with their peers, especially during these critical periods of their school life. For instance, transition to secondary, change of school setting appeared to have a negative effect on their peer relationships.

4.6 Theme 2: Family Experiences

Prior to the presentation of the thematic data, it is vitally important to acknowledge the interrelationship between the following two sub-themes. Reciprocal relationships characterise the interactions between the family circumstances and the family dynamics, for example, family circumstances may cause poor family dynamics, while the dynamics may bring about improvements in the others.

In relation to family experiences, the two groups' narratives appeared to display the most differences, specifically in relation to their family dynamics. Group One pupils appeared to experience more negative and problematic relationships with their parents. In contrast, Group Two pupils, in the majority, described experiencing positive relationships with their parents and in some cases with their siblings. In addition, the majority of Group Two pupils described a supportive, encouraging home environment despite the existence of negative family circumstances, for example, parents' divorcing or the father being imprisoned.

Table 4. 2 Thematic Map: Theme 2

Thematic Map: Theme 2 Family Experiences

Theme	Sub-Theme	Sub-Theme Categories and their descriptors
Family Experiences	Family Circumstances	Family Life Events These included: parent's divorce/separation; father abandonment; reconstituted families; fostering; bereavement (death of a close family member).
		Ongoing Family Difficulties These included: domestic violence; parental arguments; mother's mental illness (e.g. depression); father imprisonment; overcrowded living conditions.
	Family Dynamics	Positive Relations These included: good communication; supportive environment.
		Negative Relations These included: poor communication; limited interaction; unsupported environment.

4.6.1. Family Circumstances

The family circumstances section is divided into two sub-sections and is based on the duration of events presented: the family life events section and the ongoing family difficulties section. Both positive and negative circumstances are presented.

Family Life Events

Incidents that occurred in a pupils' family life are reported in this sub-section. It describes the events and incidents that pupils convey in their stories. For example, their parents' separation and divorce, family reconstitution, death of a family member, fostering, moving house.

The majority of the participants come from single parent families. Most had experienced their parents' divorce period and were able to describe it graphically as illustrated in the following statement.

"When I was in Year 6, my dad and mum split up [...] my mum and dad didn't make a big fuss when they split up, they just sat us down, and they said that they don't love each other anymore. And I was fine... I didn't mind, because they never really got on for a couple of years and I knew it was for the best. And it was for the best, because the atmosphere in the house was better."

(Freddie, Group One).

However, some participants report never having the opportunity to meet their fathers because their parents had separated when they were very young or had never been together.

"I live with my mum... it's been ok. I don't know about my dad. I don't know who my dad is. I never met him."

(Jordan, Group One)

Besides living with one parent there were a number of pupils who were a member of a reconstituted family. One of those pupils however said that he had moved to foster parents.

Some participants revealed how their families had experienced a period of bereavement; either the death of a close family member, for example a sibling or the death of an extended family member. Some of these pupils were able to vividly describe that difficult period of their life, explaining how unsupported they felt during their grief and the impact this incident had on them. An example of these experiences is conveyed in the following comment:

“When I was in Year 7, my granddad passed away and I was there with him when he passed away. I was actually holding his hand and that has not helped. Because I had to come back to school and I got suspended straight away. Because I was angry about him dying... it didn’t deserve him to die. I am still angry about it. It is like I went crazy for a little while and I just started behaving really bad and I got suspended. [...] and every time I get angry I think about him. I don’t want to, it just comes into my head and it makes me feel really angry. I do try not to. But when I get angry I see him dead in the bed and that makes me flip.”

(Marco, Group Two)

In addition, there were a number of parents, particularly in the second group of pupils, who had decided to move house and consequently their children had to change school. The conditions and the impact of this are discussed in the following sections.

Ongoing Family Difficulties

When exploring a pupils' home situation, it was revealed that pupils were often experiencing on-going difficulties that related to family issues. For example, there were a number of pupils who continued witnessing domestic violence or severe arguments between their parents, pupils who had parents with mental illness (such as depression), or who had been in prison. There were also pupils who lived in overcrowded conditions. Data extracts demonstrating some of these persisted family circumstances are presented as follows.

Table 4. 3 Data Extracts

Data Extracts for Ongoing Family Difficulties Sub-theme

Data Extract	Coded for
<i>"My dad started being kind of quite rough with us and then he walked out, well he didn't walked out, my mum kicked him out [...] I know that my dad is a good person. I just can't get over when he was being harsh to my mum and bitten up my mum. I just can't get over that" (Taylor, Group One)</i>	Domestic violence
<i>"My mum and dad were really, really arguing, really arguing, like every day. My dad was quite an aggressive person and my mum got bad temper as well. They both got bad temper and they are both fighting people and it just wasn't working" (Marco, Group Two)</i>	Arguments among parents
<i>"My mum is a bit, she was a bit depressed. She feels like she can do nothing. My mum has been depressed for years... she just came back from hospital, and she is living with us now..." (Taylor, Group One)</i>	Mother's mental illness (depression)
<i>"My dad's been arrested and stuff, so that's hard... he got arrested for something to do with drugs [...] he is in prison for conspiracy to supply drugs. So he is just there for the moment, but hopefully he will get bounce so... but I'm just upset cause I don't know how long he can get. He tells me that it could be between five to twenty years and I am just like, well it's gonna be really long. It's gonna be really hard without him. So that's also putting a lot of pressure on me and stuff because it upsets me and I think about it and it upsets me." (Maggie, Group Two)</i>	Father imprisoned

The findings also indicate that some of the pupils participating in this study were exposed to some of these conditions simultaneously. It appeared that especially those individuals affected by persistent difficult family circumstances impacted upon their family relations, these issues are described in detail in the following section.

4.6.2. Family Dynamics

Pupils' relationships with their family members, including parents, siblings and extended family members are presented in this section. There are significant differences between these two groups' narratives and their responses are presented separately because of these content differences.

The participants in Group One, permanently excluded pupils, tended to describe more negative relationships as being linked to poor communication and limited interaction with their family members, especially with their parent/s. They described situations of limited contact, isolation, blaming, shouting, complaining, not being listening to. Feelings of disappointment were also expressed because of their limited interaction with their parent/s, as described in the following comment:

"He (his dad) wasn't really there for me. All my mates were saying "Oh, my dad took me to this place, my dad took me to that place" and my dad wasn't really there basically. He was there, but he wasn't really there."

(Taylor, Group One)

In addition, pupils expressed feelings of not being supported or discouraged by their parents concerning issues that related to their education. As described in the following comment:

"We (herself and her mother) had an argument about it (exclusion) this morning as I was just saying how she doesn't like encouraging me when things are bad, like now, and I was just saying, yeah, if you work hard you will get a job and she was saying you will get shit work when you are older."

(Emily, Group One)

The permanently excluded pupils appeared to feel disappointed by their relations with family members.

In spite of these overall negative family experiences, two pupils from Group One described having a close relationship with at least someone from the family.

However, it was not a parent who supported the pupil on a daily basis. For example, this participant reports experiencing continuous bullying from her peers however, she describes her only positive relationship in the following comment:

"...we always talk and that, my nan is there for me. She doesn't want to see me hurt and that. She worries about me. I ring her about every night and tell her about school. And when I've had a good day she would just say "Oh, I'm proud of you". But when I've had a bad day she would just say "Ignore them all, they can see who you really are [...]" I don't really speak to anyone else. I don't talk to my dad because he just gets angry all the time... he just doesn't listen."

(Stephanie, Group One)

In contrast with the pupils in Group Two in the majority described their relationships with their family members in a more positive light compared to those participants in Group One. Pupils described good, positive relations with family members, especially with their parents. These pupils felt their parents wanted to listen to them, to hear their version of events. Additionally, these pupils described their parents as understanding them. A comment frequently reported by these participants was, they could see *"where I was coming from"*. Some pupils described how their parents advised them, *"teach them"*, to handle things at school.

Examples of their stories:

"They wanted to figure out why these fights happened first and what was my story. They always want to find out what's going on first."

(Cole, Group Two)

"They've talked to me about why do you do it and tried find other ways. They just try to teach me. And I am trying to learn."

(Marco, Group Two)

Some pupils even mentioned how they were punished at home because of their school behaviour. They report understanding their parents' position and seemed to appreciate their family's values and rules.

This participant describes her parents' reactions on two occasions, when she became involved in a fight and was subsequently expelled:

“About the fight, my mum said “Well, to be honest I’m not gonna ground you” because she knew as well, “but I really don’t want you to get in any more fights because you shouldn’t be doing that” and stuff like that. But I didn’t get really tough because my mum could see where I was coming from, but my mum said I should just defending myself, not hit her as bad as I did and my dad just said the same really. [...] but the expelled thing, my parents were really upset when I got expelled, my dad was more like punishing me and stuff and he said I really shouldn’t do that again and I had a big lecture like about an hour and he just said he would ground me for two months.”

(Maggie, Group Two)

The following participant describes his parents’ disappointment as a result of his behaviour at school and his exclusion:

“They are not really angry. They are more disappointed, because they know what I can do. This is what they keep saying to me. They know that I can do it well and this is why they are disappointed.”

(Marco, Group Two)

A prominent comment made by these participants expressed how they believed their parents “back them up” when they needed them the most. This second group of participants described supportive relations with good and two-way communication i.e. discussing issues together, joint decisions.

“My mum and dad backed me up all the way because they knew how it was like. My sister went in the same primary school [...] and she knew what was going on too. And mum used to come in school and talk to them [...] we had a lot of talks at home and we were trying to sort it out.”

(Antonio, Group Two)

As previously mentioned, a number of pupils appreciated the effort their parents had made in deciding to change house for their future benefit. Participants claim how it was their parents' decision to keep them away from trouble or to give them an opportunity for a better life, in and out of school.

"In Primary I went school in East London. When I was ten I moved up here. And the reason I moved up here was because I've lost a friend with a knife... because London... gangs. [...] In London you have to have a bit of attitude and I was getting involved in things that I shouldn't be getting involved in, like I was with some eighteen-year-old, sixteen-year-old and I was ten. And I shouldn't... My dad wanted to move, my mum wanted to live somewhere else, because of my safety they didn't want me back there. So I moved up here. [...] she said that I didn't want you to have that life. She said if you got bad temper now, imagine what would happen next."

(Marco, Group Two)

"When I was in London I was only little and my dad found it really rough and he didn't want me around all these stabbings and all these stuff that was going on so he just moved me to X because he thought it was better."

(Maggie, Group Two)

"In Year 8 we have decided to move house because it was just escalating again and the same thing would happen (fixed term exclusion) in the secondary school, so we have decided to move house."

(Antonio, Group Two)

Finally, sound links with siblings were also revealed in a number of descriptions, for instance some siblings were positive role models for them.

“My youngest half brother has just done his university degree so he has got a pretty good job at the moment [...] that’s what I want to do. So, I’m asking him for advice on what he did to get the way he is. I think I’m getting well with him.”

(Antonio, Group Two)

On the whole, both groups of pupils described the existence of negative, stressful family circumstances. By contrast, there appeared to be substantial differences between the two groups in narratives about their family dynamics. On the one hand, Group One pupils described having negative relationships with their carers linked to poor communication and to an inadequate home environment. While, Group Two pupils in the majority, described experiencing good, positive relationships with their parents and being part of a supportive, caring home environment.

4.7 Theme 3: Personal Attributions

This section describes pupils’ attributions to themselves and to their behaviour in relation to school exclusion. These issues relate to their sense of fairness and locus of control, both internally and externally and are presented in the following Table

Both groups of pupils exhibited similar characteristics in their stories.

Table 4. 4 Thematic Map: Theme 3

Thematic Map: Theme 3 Personal Attributions

Theme	Sub-Theme	Sub-Theme Categories and their descriptors
Personal Attributions	Sense of Fairness / Unfairness	Fair Exclusion
		Unfair Treatment (comparing self to others)
	Locus of Control	Blaming i.e. self, others
		Willingness to Change
		Feelings of Regrets
	Pupil's Insight: Understanding of Pupils' Disruptive Behaviour and Teachers' Reactions	

4.7.1. Sense of Fairness / Unfairness

One of the most consistent themes that arose from the participant's descriptions concerned their underlying belief that their treatment regarding the exclusion had been unfair. The vast majority of participants expressed this belief of having been treated unfairly, particularly in relation to their peers. Some pupils explained how they had been treated differently from other students at school, as they had been punished (excluded) when their peers who behaved in similar ways had avoided exclusion. However, the majority of the participants thought they "*did deserve it*", but they also felt that their peers should have been punished.

"The time I got expelled (permanently) was because of the incident with that other person and I would expect him to get a detention or to get into some trouble, but he didn't. And I got all of it. I did quite deserve it, yeah... but the other person should have had some sort of a punishment as well."

(Jordan, Group One)

"I got suspended once because I was fighting, and she didn't get suspended at all. She didn't get in any trouble, and I got in big trouble."

(Ashley, Group One)

One participant recalled being punished when other pupils around her were behaving in a worse manner and they had escaped punishment. She described the situation in her classroom where everyone around her was screaming and shouting, but only she received detention.

"To be honest, fair enough, I might have had a bit of chat, like everyone would, but, I mean I'm not an angel I don't sit there in silence, but I am not the one running around, screaming and shouting like she (her teacher) says I am."

(Maggie, Group Two)

This participant continued explaining how she had in fact exacerbated the situation by continuing to talk back to the teacher:

"She gives me detentions for it when it wasn't me. Then I never used to shut up and then I used to get into trouble for that. Because, I was like, why shut up, if I would get into trouble [...] there was no point sitting in silence if the teacher was like not teaching anyway and everyone else was running around, screaming and shouting. And I was getting into trouble as well. So I thought, why not be bad myself if I'm getting the blame anyway, so I did that, and then I ended up getting expelled again and then, Oh God..."

A considerable number of pupils felt this treatment was unfair because their version of story about a particular incident was not listened to by their teachers. Some pupils associated this with teachers' negative attitudes, as presented in previous sections. Pupils explained that because of their perception that some teachers didn't like them, they often ended up getting the blame, even when it wasn't their fault:

"I was expelled 'cos apparently I was jumping on the table, but I didn't."

(Jordan, Group One)

"I got into trouble because she said that I didn't do my work, but I actually did my work."

(Kyle, Group One)

There was only one participant from either Group, who at the conclusion of his interview confessed that his permanent exclusion was in fact fair after all:

"Obviously in my eyes I don't think it's fair because it's me. Obviously I don't want to kick myself out. But, I don't know... maybe they think that they gave me enough chances and it was time to kick me out [...] probably they did, they gave me enough chances. Yeah, probably it was fair."

(Freddie, Group One)

The sense of fairness is a complex issue. In terms of having disobeyed the school rules, pupils felt they had been treated fairly, but then not fairly, as others had not been punished in the same way. Moreover, pupils realised that sometimes they were the ones making things worse by talking back.

4.7.2. Locus of Control

In this sub-section, issues relating to pupils' locus of control are presented, for example blaming self or others, displaying any feelings of regrets and their willingness to change. Similar stories were conveyed by both groups of pupils.

Blaming

Twelve of the thirteen participants took responsibility for their actions by blaming or describing themselves as *"being stupid"*; not doing what they were *"meant to be doing"*; *"being rude to teachers"*; *"doing some things wrong"*; not having *"manners like other kids"*. When reflecting upon the pupils' accounts a sense of maturity becomes evident, this is illustrated by the claim that no one else can control their lives and they are the person to blame for their behaviour.

"It's no one else's fault. It's my fault. They can't control what I'm doing."

(Cole, Group Two)

"Can't blame anyone else for how I act."

(Jordan, Group One)

"It's actually my life and I am the one who controls me. It's my fault."

(Brooke, Group Two)

Three out of the twelve participants who blamed themselves, also accused peers and or teachers to justify their position. It is essential to consider this information in light of the fact that these three pupils were victims of bullying, as described in their

narratives. These pupils admitted they did some “nasty” things too, not just in response to of others student’s behaviour, but also because they felt that they had to defend themselves. These young pupils also blamed their teachers for not doing something to prevent them being subject to bullying.

An example of this situation is described in the following comment:

“I do blame myself a little bit, but not as much as I blame the other people... like the teachers. Because they could help me more, stop the people from bullying me but they didn’t, and pupils kept bullying me... it was a chain reaction [...] kids were bullying me and basically I took things in my own hands because teachers weren’t doing anything. So I just used to beat them up because they beat me up and teachers didn’t like that, and I got suspended [...] they could just sit me down and talked to me. But they never did. Then they didn’t like what they got after...”

(Antonio, Group Two)

The following participant took no responsibility for her actions or her behaviour. She is a young girl who had a series of fixed term exclusions, mainly because of truancy and was eventually excluded permanently due to an incident of drinking alcohol in the school setting. However, she took no responsibility of her actions saying that:

“It’s their fault. They made things look worse than it was. They made it a big deal. That’s what it is. So, I get more in trouble”

(Emily, Group One)

Overall, this section contains a substantial number of contradictions. In particular, pupils appeared to be able to blame themselves or hold themselves responsible, but then considered the consequences of their actions as unfair. This could be due to an

expectation of the school to be more understanding of them as individuals however, possible interpretations will be discussed in the following chapters.

Willingness to Change

It is evident that some participants extend a willingness to change their behaviour. Once they were prepared to take responsibility of their actions, they described how they wanted to change their behaviour.

"I don't want to take it anymore. I want to stop fighting. So I started boxing. As soon as I started that, I just got calmer and tried to find solutions about what I can do instead of fighting."

(Cole, Group Two)

"I know what is happening and I am getting help as well, because I wanna stop myself. I don't wanna be suspended anymore. When I get so angry, I should walk away from the problem and then I could come back when I am calm instead of just exploding"

(Marco, Group Two)

The same participant claimed the experience of being excluded made him want to change:

"I nearly got excluded forever, permanently, nearly. And I just didn't have any problems since then, because I was just terrified that I would be expelled forever, and I didn't want that... And never again, I am not gonna go in that stage again. This experience... you learn from your mistakes. And I have learnt from my mistakes."

(Marco, Group Two)

Feelings of regrets

Participants in Group One, who were permanently excluded, expressed some feelings of regrets for their actions. In some instances they had requested a second chance from the Head Teacher, claiming how they: *“could be very different next time”*.

“I want them to give me one more chance and go back to school [...] If I go back now, I would be perfect, I would do nothing wrong, because I want my education back... I’ve missed so much, I’ve missed a year and a half so obviously I’ve missed a lot of work so I wanna catch up. So if I were back to mainstream I would knuckle down. As soon as I was out, I wanted to go back. I regret it now obviously but I am still here (EOTAS). I am just waiting to give me another chance.”

(Freddie, Group One)

4.7.3. Understanding Pupils’ Disruptive Behaviour and Teachers’ Reactions

In this sub-section, pupils’ understanding of disruptive behaviours happened at school and their teachers’ reactions to these are presented.

All the participants were able to identify the main reasons why a school may exclude pupils, for example, swearing, being abusive, being rude, fighting, not doing school work, etc. These pupils have described in detail the issues regarding their behaviour and endeavoured to provide insights into their teachers’ reactions.

Only a few pupils were able to understand and sympathise with their teachers' reactions. This pupil described a similar situation where pupils' misbehaviour had upset some teachers:

"People shouting at the teachers and teachers just walked out crying and stuff [...] all the teachers were always getting shouted at by other people and they got so upset because of the things they used to swear to teachers, and teachers got really upset and then they would walk out and had the deputy head come in and talked to us about it."

(Maggie, Group Two)

This participant continued to explain that most pupils behave badly in school because they want to impress their peers. She then defended the school's position to exclude them saying that:

"They should go. Yeah. Because not everyone wants to mess up their future, if they want to mess up their future, they can do it on their own, but not everyone wants to do that [...] I suppose its stopping other people from learning and they don't want them in there, because they want people to learn and not just sit there doing nothing while other people go and disrupt them."

4.8 Quantitative Analysis

This section presents the data generated by the administration of the PASS questionnaire, which was given to participants at the conclusion of their interview. In this section possible interpretations that explain these results are provided. These

interpretations relate specifically to particular factors that are not discussed in detail in the following chapters.

As explained in the Methodology Chapter, this questionnaire had automatically produced the individual profiles for each pupil participating across the nine factors measured. The scores produced were in percentiles. These data, pupils' individual profiles, are illustrated in Appendix 11.

For comparison purposes between the two groups scoring across the nine factors measured, further descriptive statistics, i.e. mean values and standard deviation values, were calculated using pupils' individual percentile scores. These are presented in the following Table.

Table 4. 5 Pupils Attitudes to Self and School (PASS)

Percentile* Mean Values (and standard deviations) of nine factors measured, Group One and Group Two.

Factors	Group 1 (N=7)	Group 2 (N=6)
F1: Feelings about school	27.1 (14.5)	76.9 (33.6)
F2: Perceived learning capability	36.4 (21.4)	54.1 (28.5)
F3: Self-regard	45.6 (27.6)	59.0 (24.4)
F4: Preparedness for learning	22.9 (23.7)	51.2 (28.5)
F5: Attitudes to teachers	51.4 (19.6)	90.1 (8.7)
F6: Motivational measure (General work ethic)	51.4 (25.1)	82.9 (12.2)
F7: Confidence in learning	39.8 (26.4)	75.1 (23.4)
F8: Attitudes to attendance	28.5 (25.7)	73.5 (33.1)
F9: Response to curriculum demands	37.3 (30.0)	54.8 (19.4)

* Higher the percentile score, the more positive the pupil attitude / self-perception.

As illustrated in Table 4.5, Group One pupils' scores were lower in all nine factors compared to Group Two scores. Measures, such as pupils' attitudes to school (F1; F5; F8) appeared to show some disparity in the scores of the two groups, with the first group showing much less positive attitudes and with the second group showing notable positive attitudes to school (scored above 75% of the general population). Both groups' scores on measures related to self category (F2; F3) fall into the second third of the general population (scored between the 33-66%), however, the

Group Two scores were higher than Group One. Again, in measures related to learning, such as pupils' attitudes to learning (F4; F7), there was some disparity between the two groups' scores. This was also the case for pupils' motivational measures (F6; F9). Regarding the first motivational measure (F6) which is about pupils' motivation to succeed in life, not just at school, but beyond, Group Two scored particularly highly, above 75%. This is discussed in more detail in the following chapters in relation to the findings generated by the interviews.

Overall, then, permanently excluded pupils (Group One) displayed less positive attitudes across all the nine factors measured compared to pupils at risk (Group Two). However as can be seen in the table above some similarities between the two groups' profiles do exist. Both groups of pupils demonstrated a similar pattern of responses in relation to their lowest and highest scoring. The lowest score of both groups of pupils related to their capability to respond to school demands (F4), whereas, their highest scores related to pupils' attitude to teachers (F5) and to their motivation to succeed in life (F6).

Generally, the analysis of this quantitative data indicates some disparities between the two groups, which have not emerged in the qualitative analysis of the data collected in the interviews. For instance, as mentioned previously in this chapter, the majority of participants in both groups' expressed their school experiences to be negative, whereas according to the scores on this questionnaire, Group Two pupils seem to displaying positive attitudes to school. A number of explanations for this discrepancy are possible. For example, both groups mentioned that during their education they had come across some teachers with good qualities. It could be that

Group Two pupils had experienced more close relations with these specific teachers who understood their position and were able to provide some kind of support. Indeed, some differences were indicated in pupils narratives regarding the support received from school or from individual teachers. Group Two pupils described receiving some sort of in-classroom support by individual teachers, as well as some special arrangements having been made by the school to support them in overcoming their difficulties. In addition, it could be claimed how this group of pupils received constant support from school because they were currently under a PSP. A consequence of this means these young people have regular meetings with their PSP co-ordinator who evaluates their progress and carefully organises their education. Moreover, this group of pupils, who had been identified at the greatest risk of exclusion, had just gone through a successful period of schooling, in order to avoid exclusion. Considering these possible explanations closely, it could be argued that the Group Two pupils are more actively engaged with their schooling and therefore, display more positive attitudes across the board.

Further statistical analysis tests were carried out comparing the overall mean values of the two groups. The overall mean attitude of Group One was 37.82 (SD=10.86) whereas the mean attitude of Group Two was 68.62 (SD=13.37), a mean difference of 30.79. An independent samples t-test comparing the overall mean attitude of the two groups gave statistically significant results: $t(11)=4.59$, $p=0.001$. The equivalent non-parametric test also gave statistically significant results (Wilcoxon $W=28.000$, $Z=-3.00$, $p=0.003$).

Independent samples t-test also conducted to compare mean values of the two groups on the individual factors. There was a significant difference between the two groups in the majority of the individual factors measured: F1 [$t(11)=3.57$, $p=0.004$]; F5 [$t(11)=4.45$, $p=0.001$]; F6 [$t(11)=2.79$, $p=0.017$]; F7 [$t(11)=2.54$, $p=0.028$]; and F8 [$t(11)=2.76$, $p=0.018$]. There was no significant difference between the two groups in the factors: F2 [$t(11)=1.28$, $p=0.227$]; F3 [$t(11)=0.92$, $p=0.378$]; F4 [$t(11)=1.95$, $p=0.077$]; and F9 [$t(11)=1.23$, $p=0.245$] despite the differences in means, as a result of the high standard deviations. Variation in scores within groups was in general high, as can be seen from Table 4.5.

These results demonstrate that there are some differences between the two groups' attitudes to school and self. Specifically, these results suggest that the two groups of pupils differ in factors related to school (F1: Feelings about school; F5: Attitudes to teachers; F8: Attitudes to attendance), to their confidence in learning (F7) and to their general motivation (F6).

No differences are found between the two groups' attitudes in factors related to self (F2: Perceived learning capability; F3: Self-regard; F4: their preparedness for learning; F9: their response to curriculum demands). As explained by the questionnaire authors (a detailed description of all nine factors can be found in Appendix 6), F2 measures learner's self-efficacy skills, F3 measures learner's sense of self-worth in the long term, F4 measures learner's preparedness to respond to learning demands, and finally, F9 measures learner's motivation to undertake and complete curriculum tasks. It could be argued that all these factors related to pupils' attitudes as learners. The fact that no differences were found between the two

groups on these factors could be because, as stated in previous chapters, the majority of the pupils who participated in this project have struggled with long-term difficulties within the learning environment, which may have affected their attitudes as learners in similar ways.

As noted in previous chapters, quantitative data collected aimed to explore differences between the two groups in ways that corresponded with their personal accounts during their interviews, but with greater emphasis to have been given to the qualitative information collected. However due to crucial limitations revealed by the use of this questionnaire – explained in the latest chapter – the researcher argues as neither individual profiles nor comparisons among the two groups are to be discussed further in this project; but, only pupils' performances on specific factors relevant to the information gathered in the interviews are to be presented and discussed in the next chapters.

4.9 Follow-up Data: Case Studies of Pupils 'At Risk'

A year after the completion of the main phase of this study, the researcher contacted the mainstream setting aiming to collect updated information in relation to the Group Two pupils and their behaviour at school. From a total of six pupils, only one pupil left the mainstream 'permanently' and another continued his education at home. The rest of the group were in mainstream, still.

Specifically, Group Two was initially composed by Year 8 pupils, 4 males; 2 females. The follow-up data indicated how the 2 female participants managed to avoid being excluded again – none incident of exclusion was recorded; 2 out of 4 male participants had experienced fixed term exclusion but still continue on PSP – in their Year 9, two incidents of fixed period exclusion were recorded; the last 2 male participants left mainstream – home education and MM arrangements.

Their stories are illustrated here. Pseudonyms are used to keep students anonymity.

Owen: The only boy who left mainstream education and joined EOTAS.

Interestingly, this is the only ‘looked after’ child participating in this project.

Approximately six months after the interview, Owen was sent to another mainstream school part of a MM arrangement with unsuccessful results; four months afterwards, he moved to an out of school provision. Following a phone conversation with Owen’s Social Worker, Owen seems much happier in this setting and there are no plans for his reintegration to mainstream. Therefore, for the purposes of this project, his MM to EOTAS is considered as a ‘permanent exclusion’.

Antonio: He is currently educated at home. When interviewed, Antonio described experiencing bullying which urged him and his parents to change various settings throughout his school life. He showed how disappointed he felt from his peers’ teasing as well as from his teachers’ responses. A phone conversation held with Antonio’s mother described how difficult it was for Antonio to continue his education on the school premises. Soon after the interview, Antonio started refusing to attend school despite parental encouragement. His mother believed how the previous

incidents of bullying and his teachers' incompetence to manage these incidents reinforced Antonio's negative attitude to schooling. Therefore, his parents decided to continue his education at home.

Cole and Marco: Both boys continue their education in mainstream, despite a few incidents of fixed period exclusion. Their PSP co-ordinator explained that throughout Year 9, there were only two occasional incidents of fixed period exclusion per pupil. Cole was excluded once in March 09, then again in June. Marco was excluded once in November 08 and again in June 09. The co-ordinator reported these were 'minor' incidents and both boys show improvement with their behaviour demonstrating good potential to remain in mainstream education.

Brooke and Maggie: Both girls experienced no exclusion. Soon after the interviews held, Brooke and Maggie were discharged from their PSP. Throughout Year 9 they demonstrated good behaviour at school. Towards the end of Year 9, due to family reasons Maggie left school and joined a mainstream secondary school located out of county.

In summary the follow-up data revealed that one third of Group Two participants (Owen and Antonio) found it hard to cope in mainstream education, but only one sixth was 'permanently' excluded from school (Owen). The remaining participants either have been discharged from PSP and no longer considered to be at risk of exclusion (Brooke and Maggie) or are moving towards being discharged from PSP demonstrating good potential to avoid exclusion in the future (Cole and Marco).

A key finding from this study is the only participant 'permanently' excluded is a LAC who did not report family support in his initial interview. Furthermore, when interviewed, the participant educated at home strongly suggested feeling supported by his parents who, possibly, decided to offer him an alternative option to his education.

This follow-up information further highlights how the differences between the two groups' narratives can be crucial in understanding factors that help children to avoid exclusion. Indeed, family factors revealed in the analysis of this data, can support pupils at risk to avoid school exclusion and remain in mainstream.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

5.1 Introduction

This chapter commences by providing a brief summary of the findings that emerged from the qualitative analysis. They are discussed in relation to the research aims and questions, as well as in relation to the literature reviewed in previous chapters. The key findings that emerged from quantitative analysis are also discussed here.

5.2 Summary of Findings

The main aim of this project was to identify factors that are important in avoiding school exclusion. This was achieved by exploring the views of two groups of pupils (Group One: pupils who have been excluded permanently; Group Two: pupils who have avoided permanent exclusion despite being at risk). This project suggested that by looking for similarities and or differences in the narratives presented by the pupils making up these two groups it would be possible to identify those critical factors that support young people to remain in a mainstream setting and possibly avoid school exclusion. Specific focus has been given to school and family factors and to the pupils' perceptions of themselves. In relation to these three parameters, the main findings of this project are discussed as follows.

In relation to the school system, the analysis of pupils' narratives indicated similarities between the two groups, in particular, regarding their negative school

experiences with their teachers and peers. In addition both groups of pupils indicated how they had experienced various types of difficulties in the classroom context relating to their access to the curriculum. Moreover, there appears to be some substantial differences in relation to the level of school support received by the participants to address these difficulties.

Regarding the family system, the analysis of their narratives indicated similar family problems for all participants and highlighted the stressful family circumstances in which these young people were living. The one category in which there was a notable difference between the two groups was in family dynamics, for instance pupils' relations with family members, especially parents. In the narratives of Group Two the parents appeared to be more supportive of their children and created a more encouraging home environment.

Finally, in relation to their personal attributions, the majority of pupils took responsibility for their actions at school. Pupils felt that exclusion was a fair consequence of their behaviour; though, they highlighted how their treatment received from the school was often unfair and unjust, when comparing themselves to other students.

The analysis of quantitative data indicated some disparities between the two groups with the permanently excluded pupils displaying significantly less positive attitudes to school and self than the pupils who have avoided permanent exclusion, despite being at the greatest risk. For instance, the at risk pupils presented positive attitudes in factors related to school i.e. feelings towards teachers. A detailed examination of

their profiles revealed that, amongst pupils at risk (Group Two), the lower scores were all in the factors relating to self-perceptions of capability to respond to school demands. Whereas in the permanently excluded group of pupils (Group One), two of the three lowest scores related to general perceptions to school, suggesting a distinctly different set of perceptions focused on disengagement. Whether these students started off with a profile similar to those participants in Group Two is unknown, but it may be that they always were distinctive.

Ultimately, this research project aimed to identify certain critical factors that can support pupils to avoid school exclusion. In relation to this, evidence collected from excluded young people participating in this project, emphasised the importance of developing good, positive relationships between the involved parties (pupil, parent, teacher), in particular the promotion of a genuine communication and collaboration between home and school. In addition, pupils highlighted the importance of receiving support from school, not just to address their emotional needs but also their apparent learning difficulties. Finally and most importantly, excluded pupils' narratives emphasised the important role the family plays in the avoidance of school exclusion. Follow-up data also concurs with need for family support as a protective factor to avoid exclusion.

5.3 Factors related to School System

All participants described having negative experiences within the school setting. They vividly narrated their poor relationships with the majority of their teachers and

also reported their difficult relations with their peers, for example fighting, bullying. Moreover, the young participants identified and explained the nature of the difficulties they were experiencing in accessing learning. According to these students the majority of these difficulties remained un-identified by the school. Differences on the level of school support to address these needs were noted. Further, in spite of their negative experiences during their school life, the young people described good relations with some of their teachers. On the whole, pupils' school experiences seemed to be similar in both groups, with no major disparities between them.

Generally, these findings agree with previous research results that have described the nature of excluded pupils' school life. Previous research (Hayden & Dunne, 2001; Hilton, 2001; Munn & Lloyd, 2005; Rendall & Stuart, 2005) also indicated excluded pupils' negative experiences within the school setting and noted the breakdown in pupil-teacher relationship, as well as the difficulties excluded pupils experience in relation to their peer relationships. Moreover, previous research also emphasised pupils' difficulties in accessing learning (i.e. Gross & McChrystal, 2001).

5.3.1. Experiences with Teachers

Overall, pupils' experiences with their teachers were described as negative and poor. Pupils described feeling unsupported by the majority of their teachers. Pupils felt that their teachers did not understand them and the position they were in and consequently there was limited communication between them and their teachers. These findings support previous studies that explored teacher-pupil relationships in

the field of school exclusion. In particular, earlier studies report that teacher-pupil relationships were poor, as excluded pupils tended to feel unsupported by their teachers (Rendall & Stuart, 2005). Similarly, other studies highlighted the breakdown in the relationship between teachers and excluded pupils, leading to a general feeling of disappointment expressed by pupils (Hayden & Dunne, 2001; Hilton, 2006; Munn & Lloyd, 2005).

In this study, excluded pupils also expressed teachers' negative attitudes towards them. Excluded pupils, in their attempt to explain their teachers' reactions, described situations where specific group of pupils – the ones that were perceived to be 'troublesome' – were constantly treated differently by school staff. Young people, often compared themselves with their peers, explained how they have been treated differently and unfairly by adults at school. Students reported they were often blamed, even when it was not their fault.

Hilton's study (2006) similarly showed the majority of excluded pupils felt that they had been picked on by their teachers. The author further suggests that for many pupils, their teachers' attitudes and behaviour "had served to exacerbate their anger and disruptive influence" (p. 340). Correspondingly, in this study, pupils described how their teachers' negative attitudes often made them feel upset and left out, which consequently had an impact on their behaviour. Pupils' acting out and challenging behaviour could subsequently justify teachers' negative attitudes. This information further indicates the existence of cycles or patterns that repeat themselves. For instance, as a pupil responds vigorously to a teacher's reprimand because he/she

feels singled out, then the teacher feels that he/she also has to little alternative but to make a robust response.

According to participants these negative attitudes on the part of teachers were often linked to poor expectations. In this study, excluded pupils' narratives seemed to indicate there were teachers who often ignored specific pupils, again the 'troublesome', during the learning process. Pupils explained that some teachers had developed a sense of 'worthiness' deciding which pupils are 'worth' of teaching. Indeed, according to the excluded students some teachers tended to operate a construct of 'worthiness' in relation to disruptive pupils (Munn & Lloyd, 2005). According to this construct, these pupils who seem to be 'able' or 'nice' are 'worth saving', whereas some other pupils who appear to be 'unworthy' of professional effort are often neglected.

Research evidence suggests that not all teachers feel able to create opportunities to include *all* children and value every child. Gibbs (2007) in an attempt to understand teachers' attributions and motivation to include or exclude children explains that teachers' commitment to inclusion, even though it is crucial for some children's education and children's future in the school setting, is indeed a complicated issue. This difficult scenario has been related to teachers' general beliefs and values regarding education and also to teachers' sense of efficacy i.e. belief that they are able to affect students' outcomes (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001). This could mean that these teachers who value education, for example believe they are responsible for *all* students' education, despite their difficulties and also have a high sense of self-efficacy. For instance, those teachers, who believe they have the

abilities to change their students' lives, are ultimately more likely to have higher expectations for all students and support their inclusion in the classroom and school and consequently positively affect their attainment and behaviour. In contrast, teachers who have low self-efficacy and who believe that certain students are beyond their capabilities, are more likely to show low expectations of some pupils – often pupils who exhibit learning and or behaviour difficulties are affected the most (Gibbs, 2007).

Still, may not be appropriate to hold teachers responsible for having different levels of self-efficacy in relation to their work, since they are part of a system that has encouraged a focus on raising the attainment of the majority, at the expense of a small minority of students.

Therefore in a busy classroom environment with a large class size – a typical setting in secondary school across the UK – teachers who are dealing with pupils that exhibit learning difficulties and also present challenging behaviour, are quite likely to show negative attitudes and have low expectations of this particular group of pupils. Hence it may be the case that this group of pupils are making, at least in part, an appropriate attribution, when they hold their teachers responsible for not listen to them or treating them equally. Overall, it could be the case that teachers' decreased commitment to inclusion and teachers' negative attitudes towards problematic students are linked.

However, teachers' circumstances are often unknown to their pupils. Pupils are often unaware of this difference in perspectives or what the demands are on teachers.

Hence, it could be suggested that both, teachers and pupils, may feel they act with justification, as they do not understand each others' position. For instance, pupils who feel unsupported by their teachers, while experiencing difficulties accessing the curriculum may end up displaying challenging behaviour. While teachers who feel under pressure to produce good results from the class may feel less able to overcome difficulties relating to individual pupils' challenging behaviour. This complexity, which remains implicit, may indeed be a major source of difficulty and anxiety when addressing school exclusion.

In this study, the participants highlighted the inconsistencies of teachers practice particularly when it comes to behaviour management. Pupils explained how teachers tended to act inconsistently, mainly because they may perceive and interpret situations differently from each other. This finding concurs with the Rendall and Stuart study (2005) which reported the negative impact these inconsistencies in the application of school rules in behaviour management may have on children's behaviour. Other researchers have also suggested that inconsistent disciplinary practices are not only ineffective in terms of classroom behaviour management in the short term, but do little to address the problem of negative behavioural trajectories in the long run, even contributing to the perpetuation and escalation of the behaviour problem over time (Skiba & Peterson, 2000; Van Acker, 1999).

The Munn and Lloyd study (2005) highlighted schools' inconsistency when it comes to behaviour issues. In their study, pupils described the situation as "a bit of a lottery" (p. 5), as the consequences of their actions depended on which teacher was involved and on the mood the teacher happened to be in on that day. Indeed, a

particular behaviour that one teacher may ignore without interrupting the lesson can escalate into a major confrontation with another teacher (Galloway et al., 1982). Pupils have identified this inconsistency in the current study also. Problems in one context with one teacher were not seen as such in another context with a different teacher. These inconsistencies in behaviour management between school staff can further have a negative effect on pupils' behaviour (Lloyd Bennett, 2005).

Yet, this behaviour management inconsistency can be understood to a certain extent as latitude needs to be made for these individual differences. After all, teachers are human beings who perceive and interpret events based on their personal characteristics and on their current feelings. Nias (1993) suggests that teachers as 'people' perceive and interpret pupils and their actions according to their unique perceptual patterns. As Galloway et al. (1982) very characteristically describe "behaviour that is mildly annoying on Tuesday morning is the last straw on a Friday afternoon" (Lloyd Bennett, 2005, p.11). Again, it could be suggested that both teachers and pupils may feel they act with justification, as there is a lack of understanding of each other's position. For instance, pupils' behaviour could escalate because of a teachers' inconsistent disciplinary practice, while individual teachers may interpret situations differently and thus act accordingly.

Although the exploration of links between school and pupils families was not one of the main aims of the current study, some information was collected in relation to home-school relationships. This limited evidence collected from some pupils, described from weak to negative links between school and parents. This is in line with previous studies which showed evidence of poor communication between the

school and the family of excluded pupils (Gordon, 2001; Hayden & Dunne, 2001; Rendall & Stuart, 2005). This poor relationship between school and parents could add to the difficulty in communicating problematic situations and circumstances the pupil may experience across contexts. For instance, learning difficulties he/she may experience in school, stressful, negative experiences he/she may experience at home. Indeed, as mentioned above, pupils participating in this study described that there was limited home-school communication.

Pupils who participated in this research project described a number of good relationships with some of their teachers, similar to other studies in the field of school exclusion (i.e. Munn, Lloyd & Cullen, 2000). Pupils, in spite of the variety of difficulties and problems they have to deal with during their school life, explained how there were individual teachers who could understand them and their position. Pupils provided evidence of the qualities they appreciate most in a 'good' teacher. This included, teachers who are able to understand them, treat everyone equally, make lessons interesting, value education and have a sense of humour. Previous studies also revealed similar qualities in teachers that were appreciated by pupils (i.e. Cooper, 1992; Howe, 1995; Solomon & Rogers, 2001; Wallace, 1996). According to the participants a 'good' teacher is someone who is more likely to exhibit positive attitudes and have high expectations of all students, including themselves, resulting in more constructive interactions with students and consequently producing positive behaviour from them (Solomon & Rogers, 2001).

5.3.2. Learning Experiences

In their narratives, the participants described experiencing various difficulties in accessing learning; for instance, poor concentration, limited attention skills and literacy difficulties. Similar findings were generated in previous studies (Gross & McChrystal, 2001; Hilton, 2006) that also emphasised the difficulties these pupils usually experienced with school work.

In this study, a number of substantial differences were identified between the two groups of pupils regarding the level of support they received to help them, access the curriculum. The majority of Group One pupils' difficulties in accessing learning remained unspecified, which is quite astonishing. These pupils expressed serious feelings of disappointment and reported how they had received limited to no support regarding their learning difficulties. One participant vividly related how the school had not only failed to identify the nature of his difficulties in accessing learning, but interpreted this as laziness. In contrast, pupils who were at risk of exclusion, the second group of pupils, described receiving some in-class support, which was mainly provided by individual teachers.

Pupils' long term experiences of difficulties in accessing learning associated with the limited amount of support provided from school could possibly explain pupils' low self-perception as learners, as well as their low scores on learning attitudes. The quantitative data collected could support this theory as pupils' perception of self as a learner was low. Excluded pupils also scored low regarding their confidence in

learning, meaning that they feel less confident and they may easily give up when they find things hard.

It is interesting to note that from a total of thirteen pupils who took part in this project; only one pupil was referred to the EPS. These pupils described experiencing difficulties accessing learning, in addition to their social, emotional and behaviour difficulties, but schools did not seem to liaise with other agencies to support these young people. Apart from some special arrangements that were provided by individual teachers, (for instance, being given extra work to help pupils' with difficulties to access learning), and some special strategies organised by the school management team (for example, running an anger management group in order to address pupils' emotional, behavioural difficulties); there was no other type of support. In relation to Group One pupils in particular, not only did there appear to be no input provided from school to support these pupils' difficulties in accessing learning, but their individual difficulties remained unspecified.

Overall, twelve out of thirteen pupils participating in this project had not been referred to the EPS, despite displaying behavioural difficulties that were of sufficient magnitude to result in permanent and or fixed term exclusions. This situation could imply that schools are often of the view that behaviour causes learning problems, that is, they make a causal attribution and so do not refer pupils whose learning problems, they feel, they understand the reasons for (Rendall & Stuart, 2005). Tobbell and Lawthom (2005) suggest that if teachers believe they cannot influence children's behaviour then they are less likely to invest their time and energy in working with the child. Instead, they are more likely to advocate the removal of that

child from mainstream education. Especially if permanent exclusions or MM are relatively easy processes to complete, and involve limited external scrutiny and accountability.

Schools and teachers should be more sensitised to these issues and apply a systemic thinking in order to develop an understanding of pupils' difficulties. This study suggests that schools should work more closely with other professionals to implement practices that support these particular young people's educational and behavioural progress and also identify any difficulties at an earlier stage.

5.3.3. Experiences with Peers

Similar to their experiences with teachers, young people described having negative experiences with their peers. According to participants' relations with peers were limited and often negative. Specifically, episodes of bullying and fighting where pupils described feeling unsupported by school were commonplace. They felt that their peers remained unpunished and continued to bully them. So, that over time, the bullying resulted in pupils either withdrawing from the peer group or resorted to acting out. In addition, there were incidents of fighting within the school setting between them and their peers, mostly with older people. These findings agree with previous research (Hilton, 2006; Hayden & Dunne, 2001) that reflected excluded pupils difficulties in the area of peer relations.

It could be argued that excluded pupils are indeed more vulnerable in peer relationships. A model proposed by Cullingford and Morrison (1997) and Lown (2005) suggests how this group of pupils may be less able to access and maintain social networks that are supportive and therefore end up developing poor relationships with their peers.

This study also revealed evidence of students' difficulties in accessing supportive social networks, as well as in developing and maintaining good, close relationships with their peers, particularly during specific periods in their school life. During these occasions where pupils aim to use their already developed social skills to form and develop new friendships, this particular group of pupils found this task especially difficult. Critical periods that have been identified by pupils include their transition to secondary school and an unexpected change of school setting. Pupils described how these were critical periods for them as they had to identify the 'right' group of peers to engage with. As one participant reported, this is the period where you might get involved with the 'wrong' group of people, just because it is easier to do so.

5.3.4. Synopsis

Issues such as the teacher-pupil relationship breakdown, teachers' inconsistent practice, unspecified learning difficulties, poor peer relations, have been depicted in the narratives of the excluded pupils participating in this study. These conditions have also been identified in previous research as risk factors for exclusion (i.e. Hilton, 2006; Munn & Lloyd, 2005).

Considering the fact that both groups of pupils had experienced difficulties at school that lead to their exclusion, these findings could be predictable. Pupils participating in this study appeared to have more similarities than differences regarding their school experiences.

Critical components that might prevent school exclusion have been implied in the pupils' narratives. The importance of the development of relationships is frequently emphasised in pupils' accounts; the kind of relationship that would also promote strong communication between parties so that they could share each other's perspectives. Alongside this study suggests that early identification of pupils' needs, as well as the implementation of more systemic models in understanding these needs by schools and teachers are crucial components to support pupils to avoid them being excluded from school.

5.4 Factors related to Family System

This project also revealed findings that relate to impact difficult family circumstances have upon their behaviour at school and their ability to cope with problematic situations. Such family circumstances were also identified in previous studies investigating excluded pupils and their families (i.e. Hayden & Dunne, 2001; Munn & Lloyd, 2005; Rendall & Stuart, 2005). These difficult family circumstances also appeared to have some bearing upon the dynamics within each family. Participants described some of their experiences at home, linked to limited interaction and poor

communication with their family members, especially parents. Even though these findings support previous research evidence, this was not the case for all the families of those pupils participating in this project. Interestingly, pupils from the second group described more positive, closer relations with their family members and appeared to have a more supportive home environment. Even data collected a year after the completion of the main phase of this project supported the conclusion that young people coming from nurturing, supportive families can avoid exclusion from school. Indeed, this seemed to be the most critical difference between the group of students that had been permanently excluded and those who had not.

5.4.1. Family Circumstances

Findings from this study emphasised the excessive exposure of excluded pupils and their families to stressful events and difficult conditions. All participants described difficult and traumatic family situations such as parents divorce; parental arguments; domestic violence; mother's mental illness, father's imprisonment; overcrowded living conditions; parent/s' remarriage; death of a close family member.

The experience of such family difficulties has been found to negatively affect a child's emotional well-being and contribute to later behaviour problems. Children raised in households exposed to acute or chronic economic strain (Conger et al., 1994), heightened levels of parental mental illness (Downey & Coyne, 1990), inter-parental conflict and violence (Rivett, Howarth & Harold, 2006), parental separation, divorce and remarriage (Hetherington, Bridges & Insabella, 1998) have been shown

to experience a variety of negative psychological outcomes in the long term (cited in Harold, Aitken, & Shelton, 2007). Furthermore, there is evidence that children from 'high-risk' families may have adverse outcomes in terms of their school careers, as well as they are the most vulnerable to school exclusion (Hayden & Dunne, 2001).

In the literature review, special attention was given to violence and attachment difficulties that appeared to act as key factors in the development of later emotional and behavioural difficulties (Lloyd Bennett, 2005). Domestic violence and often parental conflict do constitute a problem of significant social concern. According to Harold et al. (2007) two perspectives are commonly accepted to explain the negative effects on children. The first is that disruptions in the parent-child relationship have a detrimental effect on a child's well being. An issue discussed in detail in the following section. The second is that negative emotions, cognitions and representations of family relationships engender a negative effect in children. This means that it is not about the events of domestic violence itself, but about the attributions children assign to that event that determine the impact on them (Grych & Fincham, 1990, cited in Harold, Aitken, & Shelton, 2007). The significance of children's own understanding of the causes and consequences of the situation suggest the manner in which children interpret and respond to the occurrence of these incidents explains why some children may show little or no signs of negative outcomes. While other students with different or poor coping strategies go on to develop long term emotional and behaviour problems (Harold et al., 2007). In other words, there is a difference in resilience between children, based on their interpretation of such traumatic events. Indeed, a survey conducted by the Nuffield Foundation (2004) on children who experienced similar problems at home, highlighted pupils intense

feelings of worrying and of distress due to their personal attributions of the family problem.

Therefore, besides addressing substantial family difficulties there may also be considerable benefit in focusing on pupils' perceptions of their relationships' and whether they feel they are to blame for the problem. For example, Harold et al. (2007) claimed the significant role of children's self-blaming attributions for their parents' marital arguments and not the negative parenting behaviour is a prominent mechanism through which variation in their educational progress is explained. The same researchers also maintain that while treating negative family relationships is important, treating children's perceptions of family relationships may be even more important when it comes to long-term academic success and psychological well-being. Particularly, in family contexts marked by high levels of parental conflict – as appears to be the case for many excluded pupils.

As noted previously, attachment is the second important parameter in the development of emotional and behavioural problems which is extensively discussed in the literature. Bowlby's attachment theory (1988) placed substantial emphasis on the infant's need to establish a secure base. Most attachment research has emphasised the relevance of attachment relations for well-being in adolescence and adulthood.

In particular, childhood attachment security has been associated with subsequent social competence, interpersonal functioning, cognitive development and psychological well-being in adolescence and adulthood. A secure attachment has

been associated with a range of indices of well-being, including self-esteem, life satisfaction, mental health and high quality peer relationships (Woodward, Fergusson & Belsky, 2000).

By contrast, insecure attachment because of frequent separations, loss, neglect or inconsistency care (Bowlby, 1988) in a child's early years can have adverse effects on their mental health and well-being in adolescence and adulthood. For instance, young people may exhibit signs of lack of trust in others and lack of security, issues that are not only related to family relations but also to school, such as, relations with teachers and peers. Indeed, pupils with attachment difficulties may be less able to adjust to the demands and expectations of school life (Rendall & Stuart, 2005). For instance, pupils participating in this study described their adjustment difficulties when transferring to a different school setting, especially in developing new relationships with peers. This difficulty could be related to a possible lack of trust and security that children with attachment difficulties often display.

Additionally, security in the home environment is sometimes suddenly interrupted by the loss of someone, for instance a sudden death or even the end of a relationship. According to Ward (1996) bereavement can be described as "the loss of something precious" (p.19). Even though the term is most often used in the context of a person, it may also include the loss of an inanimate object, the ending of a relationship, divorce or separation, or a change in a particular situation (Ward, 1996).

Taking this into consideration, there were pupils participating in this project who had experienced loss, either because of the death of a family member, or due to their

parents divorce (the 'loss' of a parent), or even because of a school change (the 'loss' of friends). Evidence demonstrates that bereaved boys tend to show higher rates of overall psychological difficulties, with more aggressive and acting out behaviour than girls, whereas girls tend to exhibit more internalising symptoms (Dowdney et al., 1999). These conditions are often neglected and remain unacknowledged and most pupils dealing with these issues do not get any support from adults.

5.4.2. Family Dynamics

Probably the most interesting finding that emerged from pupils' narratives was the difference between the two groups' family dynamics. Regarding the first group of pupils, who had been permanently excluded, their family relations were described as poor. It could be suggested that these families' relationships were seriously affected by the excessive exposure to stressful events and difficult conditions. Besides, several studies emphasised the breakdown in relationships within families when upsetting changes or events continuously occurred (Cohen et al., 1994; Hayden et al., 2000).

Families of excluded pupils are often unable to support their children when they are excessively exposed to risk factors (Rendall & Stuart, 2005). For example, when a parent is seriously mentally ill, other members of the family are affected too and particularly children, as parent/s could become "emotionally less available to the children in the family" (p. 171). Indeed, when parents are under pressure

themselves, for example, being in the process of a divorce, or experiencing the loss of a close family member, they may become unavailable and more irritated by their children resulting in their treating them with less tolerance and understanding (Werner, 1989).

Based on this information, it could be suggested that the family of a pupil who ends up being permanently excluded often shows fewer positive characteristics and weak resilience in relation to overcoming difficulties. By contrast, however, not all families of excluded pupils fit this picture. Amongst the families of those students who had avoided exclusions there did appear to be a greater resilience when exposed to difficult conditions. This could be the critical protective factor for this group of children.

These pupils who were at the greatest risk of permanent exclusion, but for whom it has been avoided, claimed to have good, positive relations with their family members and good, two-way communication in particular with their parents. Pupils in this group felt they could talk to their parents who could understand them and advise them on how to overcome school difficulties. Most importantly, these pupils felt supported by their parents and described several actions taken by their parents in order to help them during difficult periods at school. Overall, positive relations and supportive home environments were described in the second group's narratives.

A supportive family environment is one of the protective factors identified by Werner and Smith (1982). Likewise, Kolvin et al. (1988) suggested among others that close parental care and good adult supervision, can provide protection for a child. Good

parent-child relationships were also identified as a protective factor by Jenkins and Smith (1990). A supportive family such as those described by the second group of participants in this study, may well enable adolescents to maintain sufficient resilience to overcome difficulties at school and avoid permanent exclusion.

Indeed, this disparity found in pupils' narratives regarding their family dynamics could be the most critical difference among the two groups of excluded pupils participating in this research project. It highlighted the possibility that the existence of a supportive family environment could in fact promote resilience to school exclusion. However, it needs to be acknowledged the two groups of pupils who took part in the current project were composed of two non-matched groups of excluded pupils.

One of the aims of this study was to compare the experiences of pupils who had been permanently excluded with those who had avoided permanent exclusion (despite having experienced fixed period exclusions). Therefore participants were selected and composed two groups of pupils who had similar background characteristics. However, the one area in which a disparity could not be overcome was that the majority of participants included in Group Two were pupils attending Year 8 and were a year younger than those in Group One. This age difference could have had an impact on the amount and type of support received from parents. Thus, it needs to be acknowledged that any additional support they obtained in the family environment could be simply reflecting the younger age of the pupils in this group.

In addition, these two groups of pupils went through different school exclusion experiences, as the second group of pupils has not been permanently excluded.

This could make a difference to their attributions made, for example, the experience of permanent exclusion itself could have made a difference to the attributions made by permanently excluded pupils. Indeed, it may be the case that the most substantial cause for the different attributions made by the two groups is that Group One had been permanently excluded and Group Two students did not have this experience. So that Group Two students could make similar attributions once they had been permanently excluded. Nevertheless, as mentioned, the composition of these two particular groups of pupils was an important part of this project in order to identify those critical factors that prevent school exclusion, even though this second group of pupils had not, as yet, experienced, the process of being permanently excluded.

The fact that it may yet happen, could possibly have an impact on their existing relations with their parents. Previous research evidence emphasises the negative influence a child's permanent exclusion has on his/her family (Hayden & Dunne, 2001; Munn & Lloyd, 2005; Munn, Lloyd & Cullen, 2001).

For these reasons, it is uncertain whether the Group Two family relations would be different if these pupils were also permanently excluded and in the same school year as Group One. Hence, there is a possibility that if the pupils who made up the second group were a year older, the same age as the first group of pupils and were displaying the same problems i.e. experiencing the process and the consequences of a permanent exclusion from school, their parents may also show a more negative stance towards them and or that parental support would decline.

However, data collected a year after the completion of the main phase of this project, when actually Group Two pupils reached Year 9 – same school age as the Group One pupils who participated in this project serves to highlight the existence of protective factors within the family environment in avoiding school exclusion.

Nevertheless, even acknowledging these two potential difficulties in interpreting the results presented in this project, the fact remains that the lack of other differences between the two groups makes both these arguments less tenable. The fact that both groups of pupils narrated such similar experiences suggests that age could not be a so critical factor after all. Additionally, the fact that the pupils in Group One reported poor dynamics as if these were longer-term rather than the result of a recent shift, for instance, their incident of permanent exclusion, also suggests that this is not such a critical factor in determining the outcome.

Consequently, it could be argued how the differences that emerged in pupils' narratives regarding their family relations and dynamics and the type of their family context, could be the critical factor in determining the direction of the outcome namely, the avoidance of permanent exclusion. Nevertheless, this could be an area of research for further investigations.

5.4.3. Synopsis

In summary, both groups of participants shared some similar characteristics regarding their family experiences. Such as the excessive exposure to difficult family

conditions (e.g. divorce, separation, bereavement) that were pointed out as risk factors to school exclusion. Indeed, there appears to be considerable overlap between the two groups in most respects, underlining the fact they are a relatively homogenous group. This, in turn, underscores the critical nature of the family's support as the central factor that determines the direction of the outcome i.e. for the second group of pupils avoiding permanent school exclusion.

5.5 Pupils' Personal Attributions

In this section, pupils' personal attributions, their sense of fairness / unfairness and locus of control are discussed. On the whole, pupils participating in this study expressed a sense of unfairness and a sense of injustice when it came to exclusion, especially when comparing themselves to their peers. This finding supports the conclusions of previous research (i.e. Munn & Lloyd, 2005). Interestingly, in this study, excluded pupils, in the majority, demonstrated an internal attribution style, as they took responsibility for their actions and considered themselves to have taken actions to change their behaviour. By contrast, Rendall and Stuart (2005) found that excluded pupils appeared to have an external attribution style, for example taking almost no responsibility for their actions and blaming others for their behaviour. However, that issue may be more subtle than internal or external allocation of blame.

5.5.1. Sense of Fairness and Locus of Control

On the one hand, excluded pupils, taking part in this study, expressed how it was fair for them to get punished. In particular, pupils accepted that their behaviour, for example fighting, which was the main reason for pupils' exclusion, was unacceptable and deserved the punishment of exclusion. Alternatively, they also considered it to be unfair that other pupils, who were involved in this fighting or other misbehaviour, were not excluded as well. Similar findings were also evident in previous research. Gordon (2001), Hayden and Dunne (2001) and Munn, Lloyd and Cullen (2000) found that excluded pupils often express a sense of unfairness in relation to exclusion itself, especially when comparing themselves with others.

The majority of excluded pupils participating in this study were of the view that they took responsibility for their actions, showing an internal attribution style and on some occasions had tried to change their behaviour. Munn and Lloyd study (2005) also presented similar results namely; their participants accepted and took responsibility for their own actions that led to exclusion.

Additionally, their study produced evidence that excluded pupils aimed to change their behaviour. According to their findings, excluded pupils are generally people who aspire to achieve more highly and behave better. This characteristic according to them was related to the development of pupils' low self-esteem as pupils were not able to achieve at the level of their inspirations. Thus, the pupils' self-esteem was low. According to their results, both groups of pupils showed similar low levels of

self-esteem though the first group, permanently excluded pupils, scored even lower than the non-excluded group. Similarly, the data from this study found that both groups of pupils showed similar levels (i.e. low) of self-regard – a concept similar to self-esteem – however, permanently excluded pupils scored even lower than the at risk pupils.

Concerning excluded pupils' attribution style, the Rendall and Stuart study (2005) generated opposing conclusions to those produced in this study. Their sample of excluded pupils demonstrates significant differences with the matched group in locus of control measures. The excluded group of pupils revealed a greater external locus of control than the comparison group, meaning they tended to blame their exclusion and difficulties entirely upon things beyond their control, thus appearing to be unable to change their ways.

In this study, both groups of pupils exhibited more internal attribution style, meaning they blamed themselves for their exclusion; additionally, they appeared to take actions to change their ways. Pupils' narratives revealed information explaining why they blamed themselves and presented evidence of their attempts to change their ways. The fact that both groups showed this characteristic of internal attribution style, however, underlines the assumption that there is something beyond this, which eventually helped the second group of pupils to avoid exclusion. A possible hypothesis to explain this could be developed when adapting a more systemic way of thinking.

In fact, Rendall and Stuart (2005) stated that if one context, e.g. the home, proves to be particularly stressful for children, the presence of a parallel context, e.g. the school, that provides stability and calmness may provide a sufficiently containing context in which the child can function with enough resilience to withstand the stressful events at the home and vice versa. Based on their findings, this had clearly not been the case for the excluded children in their study, who experienced difficulties both at home and in school. Similar findings were presented in this study regarding the first group of pupils. For the permanently excluded pupils, both settings appeared to be stressful and despite their willingness to change, students did not appear to show enough resilience.

However, regarding the at risk group of pupils, although one context - in this case it proved to be the home –provided a secure, positive, supportive environment where the children could function with enough resilience and withstand the stressful and difficult events in the other context, the school. Pupils in this group felt supported and this kind of relationship with their parents could affect their levels of motivation to achieve better.

Indeed, this group of pupils appeared to be more motivated to change their behaviour. Their scores on motivation to succeed in life were in much higher levels than the first group of pupils. Therefore, even though, both groups of pupils identified their part in terms of responsibility for their actions that led to exclusion they demonstrated an internal attribution style. However, only the second group appeared to be extremely motivated to actually want to change things for a better future.

5.5.2. Synopsis

This study argues how the emphasis should be placed on children's personal attributions of events and on their perceptions of their relationships with others. This study, as highlighted in previous chapters, valued pupils' perceptions. Thus, findings presented in this research project are based upon the participants own narratives, namely their interpretations of events and perceptions of relationships. For example, the permanently excluded pupils perceived their relations with others as negative and interpreted their actions as less supportive, thus they may have lost their motivation to succeed in life. Conversely, at risk pupils perceived some relations as negative, but they interpreted their parents' behaviour as being supportive, thus they may have tried harder to behave better and achieve in life which consequently led them to avoid permanent exclusion.

Harolds et al. (2007) when explaining traumatic family experiences, claimed how the focus should not be only on the traumatic family event itself and that interventions should not only aim to treat family relationships, but more importantly aim to treat children's perceptions of these family relationships. Accepting this notion, it could be stated that while treating events such as school relationships and family relationships and their effects on children are important, treating pupils' own perceptions of school and family relationships may be even more important when it comes to long-term school success and psychological well-being.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

6.1 School, Family and Child: a Systemic View of School Exclusion

This research project aimed to investigate factors related to the school, family and the self systems that may cause school exclusion or contribute to its avoidance. To create a better understanding of school exclusion, principles of systemic thinking and social constructionist theories have been accepted and applied throughout the current project by identifying the complexities between systems. These principles include investigating the inter-relations between them and valuing the personal experiences and personal constructs of each member in these systems, through the voice of the child. As detailed previously, this study was concerned with young pupils' perceptions, interpretations and understandings of events; consequently, risk and protective factors presented in this study have been introduced and identified in the participants' own narratives.

The study supported the notion that successful prevention of school exclusion should include actions that intervene in all three systems and aim to address school exclusion in the context of these. However, in order to fully appreciate the findings that emerged from this study, it could be helpful, after summarising these findings, to consider which interventions could be employed in each system. This study emphasises that only when close collaboration and genuine communication between the three systems is accomplished can school exclusion rates be ameliorated successfully.

Risk factors were revealed as being significant enough to result in pupils being excluded and are similar to those identified by previous researchers have been thoroughly discussed in the previous chapters. Particular factors related to school, family, and the child systems appeared to have profound consequences for contributing to the occurrence of school exclusion.

School risk factors included negative relationships between pupils and teachers linked to poor communication and limited understanding of the pupils' position by adults, in association with limited or no support provided by the school to address pupils' learning and social, emotional, behavioural difficulties, as well as, inconsistency in schools disciplinary practice. Negative relationships between pupils and their peers, including incidents of fighting and bullying, were also identified as school risk factors. Additionally, poor relationships between school and pupils' families was another issue that seemed to contribute to school exclusion, mainly because this poor communication between family and the school system could become a barrier to communicating, sharing issues and problems from one system to the other.

Family risk factors involved the excessive exposure of family members to stressful circumstances (i.e. separation, conflict, illness, bereavement) which could have negatively impacted upon relations between family members. Again, relationships was a key parameter. Poor relationships among family members, especially between the child and his/her parents, are usually linked to limited interaction, weak

communication and limited understanding within this context. Weak family dynamics were identified as a crucial family risk factor.

The discussion on risk factors relating to the student was mainly focused on pupils' personal attributions of events and relations with people from the surrounding systems. The majority of permanently excluded pupils appeared to perceive relationships with others, e.g. teachers, parents, peers, as negative, linked with feelings of disappointment and being un-supported. Permanently excluded pupils also tended to exhibit low self-perceptions, especially academically, which could be related to the nature of the difficulties they were experiencing at school. Indeed, permanently excluded pupils' general self-regard has been measured to be low in this study.

The permanently excluded pupils participating in this study exhibited an internal attribution style. By contrast, Rendall and Stuart (2005) concluded that permanently excluded pupils exhibited an external attribution style. The majority of the permanently excluded pupils in the present study showed an internal causal attribution which means that they took responsibility for their actions by blaming themselves for their behaviour. Even though this finding appears to be 'odd', as external attribution style was mainly associated with excluded pupils, possible explanations could be presented through their own views and perceptions.

Based on attribution theory (Weiner, 1979), pupils who attribute their behaviour and its consequences to themselves, exhibit an internal attribution style; whereas pupils who attribute these to external causes, beyond themselves, display an external

attribution style. Indeed, pupils participating in this project exhibited an internal causal attribution style by determining the causes of the event internally. However, apart from the dimension of 'causality', Weiner (1979) also described the dimensions of 'stability' and 'controllability' that need to be considered in order to fully understand attribution style.

'Stability' refers to whether the cause is likely to stay the same in the near future or change. For example, if students attributed their failure of displaying good behaviour in class to stable factors such as the difficulty of the subject, they will expect to fail in this in the future. Interestingly, though, most Group Two pupils described specific ideas of changing their behaviour in their narratives. This may indicate how these pupils have attributed their failing behaviour to non stable factors and thereby expect to succeed in changing their own behaviour in the future to avoid exclusion.

The third dimension, 'controllability' refers to whether the person can control the cause, which is often related to emotions such as anger, gratitude and shame. People who feel responsible for their failures, they may exhibit feelings of guilt; people who may fail at a task they cannot control, they may feel ashamed or angry. Indeed, most pupils felt responsible for their failure to change behaviour / avoid exclusion and demonstrated feelings of guilt. Some students who attributed exclusion to internal cause such 'uncontrollable anger', described feelings of shame. In contrast, students who attributed failure to lack of effort, and effort can be perceived as controllable, they seemed to experience emotions of guilt and consequently increased effort and showed improved performance. This appears to be the case in the majority of the Group Two participants.

Indeed, pupils participating in this project exhibited an internal causal attribution style by determining the causes of the event internally. However, there is a difference between their perception of a given determinant as a cause of what happens to them i.e. causal attribution and their belief that they can actually control what happens to them, i.e. locus of control (Palenzuela, 1984; Petterson, 1987). According to Zuroff (1990) the two concepts differ in that locus of control is evaluated prior to the outcome of the event, whereas attributions are made after the outcome of the event.

Considering the data presented in this study it could be argued that permanently excluded pupils have displayed an internal causal attribution by blaming themselves and taking responsibility for their actions that led to their exclusion, as they evaluated the outcome of their behaviour some time after the event occurred. Yet at the time of the emotional events, they may engage in externalising the locus of control; as others are held responsible for what has happened. Therefore, while permanently excluded students may hold themselves responsible for what has happened to them after the event and in the calm setting of an interview, the same attributions may not apply when they are in an emotionally charged event and they feel upset and or angry. At that time they may have a low locus of control and may not consider themselves responsible or able to change things.

At risk pupils have also exhibited an internal causal attribution, by blaming themselves and taking responsibility for their actions, when evaluated the outcome some time after the event happened. By contrast, though, they may have also applied similar attributions when they were in that emotionally charged event;

exhibited a high locus of control and considered themselves able to change i.e. behave better and avoid exclusion.

Nevertheless, the main purpose of this study was to investigate those critical factors that have been highlighted in pupils' narratives as the protective factors to school exclusion. By comparing the two groups of pupils participating in the current research project namely – permanently excluded pupils and those at the greatest risk of permanent exclusion but who have avoided it, the homogeneity between the experiences of these two groups of pupils was initially identified. However, with this homogeneity having been acknowledged, it was easier to identify those factors that were crucial in supporting the second group of pupils to avoid school exclusion.

When comparing the two groups, the one most substantial difference was the family context. While Group One pupils described weak family dynamics associated with poor communication and feelings of disappointment, Group Two described positive relationships with their parents linked to good, two-way communication. These pupils' narratives stressed the existence of a supportive and encouraging home environment. This major difference in the family context appeared to be the most important factor in determining the outcome of the second group of pupils, which was to avoid permanent exclusion.

In summary, it appears this second group of pupils managed to build on resilience within their family context to overcome the difficulties they were experiencing at school. As noted in the previous chapters, when one context (e.g. school) proves to be particularly difficult and stressful for children, the presence of a parallel context,

(e.g. home), which provides support could be the context where the child can function with enough resilience to withstand the stressful events of the other context. Apparently, this was the case regarding the second group of pupils participating in this project. Pupils at the greatest risk of permanent exclusion may have built resilience within their home environment that affected them in such a way that it supported them to overcome their difficulties and avoid school exclusion.

6.2 Implications for Practice

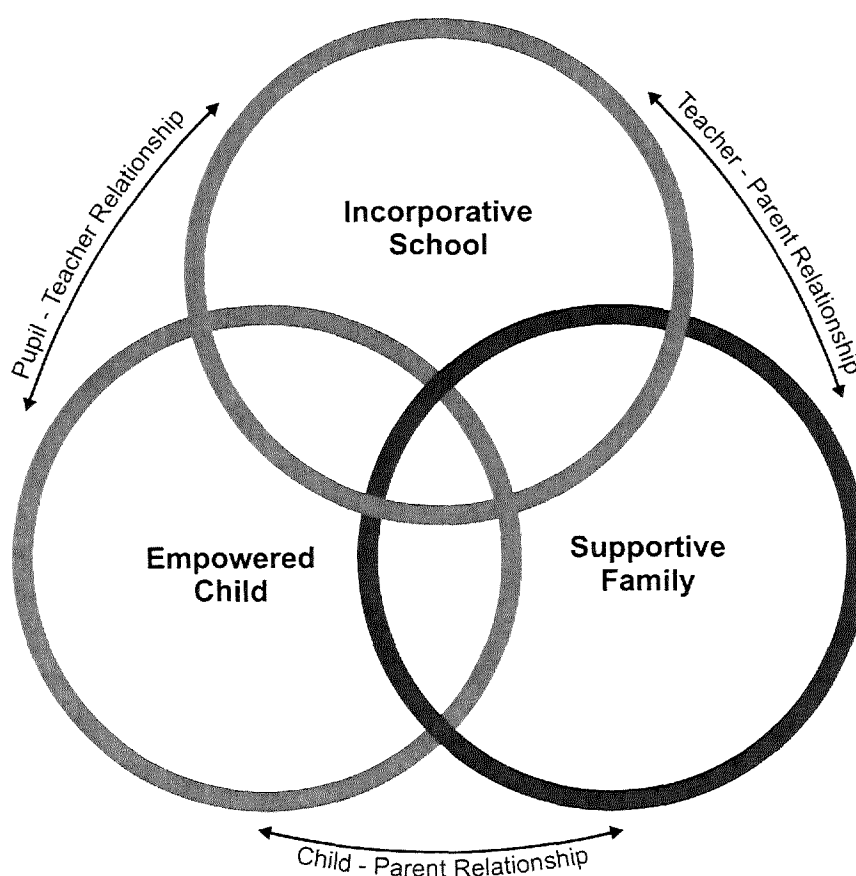
The analysis of pupils' narratives highlights the prime importance of relationships in preventing school exclusion. In their narratives, the participants emphasised either the positive impact their good relationships with significant others, or the negative impact poor relations as well as lack of relationships, may have had on them. Indeed, one of the key components in preventing exclusion is relationships; relationships between all parties, i.e. teacher-pupil, parent-child, teacher-parent, pupil-peers, associated with positive communication and good coordination among them. Pupils have emphasised the significance of relationships in studies conducted in the past, too (i.e. Munn & Lloyd, 2005).

Furthermore, this study emphasised the need for genuine collaboration to be developed between systems, as well as individual efforts each system needs to accomplish in order to contribute effectively in this collaborative framework in preventing school exclusion. Alongside this, data generated in this study in association with evidence presented in previous fundamental studies, further

emphasise three key parameters that are ought to be taken into consideration in order for the current situation of school exclusion to be ameliorated. These are the creation of incorporative/effective schools, the promotion of supportive parental care and the development of empowered children. As this study's findings suggest, major emphasis needs to be placed on the vital role of the family. However, the development of this would not be sufficient unless meaningful relationships, necessary for genuine communication between the parties and a good coordination in understanding the perspective of each system are initially developed. These issues are demonstrated in the following figure.

Figure 6. 1 A systemic view of School Exclusion

School, Family and Child: a Systemic View of School Exclusion



'Incorporative' schools, or 'effective' schools, as they are otherwise called in the literature, are those settings that promote to develop children with a powerful sense of self-worth and potentials for achievement, as well as a sense of personal responsibility for their actions and learning (Reynolds & Sullivan, 1981). These settings are characterised by an inclusive school ethos that values education for all children and aims to apply consistent and fair practice. Importantly, these schools ought to promote greater sensitivity and understanding towards pupils' school difficulties and their challenging behaviour, by recognising pupils and their parents' perspectives and positions. Most importantly, this study claims that these schools should take an active role in welcoming parents into their schools, encouraging parental involvement and supporting their role of parenting.

Further, this study suggests that emphasis should be given to the parents' role. It is crucial for children's educational progress and emotional well-being, that social, health and education professionals should promote the development of supportive family environments with caring parents who are competent and feel confident in raising their children. Parental characteristics such as understanding, tolerance, helping and contact seeking are positively associated with the wealth of children's future lives both personally and educationally. Thus, professionals working with families should implement strategies for the development of these parental skills.

Eventually, children who are raised in such supportive families and or educated in such incorporative schools would probably develop personal skills to overcome personal difficulties. Therefore, professionals working towards reducing school

exclusion should focus on developing effective schools that work closely and promote close communication with pupils' parents with the aim of supporting them to create a supportive home environment where pupils can be empowered and motivated to succeed in life.

6.3 Implications for EP Practice

EPs, among other professionals, have a distinctive contribution to offer in preventing school exclusion. This distinctive nature of the EPs contribution is related to EPs' role and status in the local authority. Typically, EPs work across multiple settings such as the school, the home, the community, and so they can support systems to increase their capacity, as well as support their collaboration (Farrell et al., 2006). This researcher claims that EPs can gain knowledge through being in this central position in the LA to help systems work together and to "oil the wheels" of joint working and collaboration. These are key features in preventing school exclusion. Hence, EPs could support each system separately to increase their capacity and most importantly support close collaboration and genuine communication between them. Some suggestions for good practice are as follows.

For instance, EPs could:

- Support schools to develop an inclusive school environment which promotes a sense of belonging and encourages inclusion beliefs (Gibbs, 2007); to promote a greater sensitivity and a better understanding towards challenging behaviour (Munn & Lloyd, 2005); to encourage parental involvement and

ensure two-way communication between school and the pupil's families (Rendall & Stuart, 2005);

- Support teachers to develop their own capacity and feel confident and competent to support inclusion for all children and meet all children's needs. for example, to overcome the conviction that nothing they do in school will prevent exclusion (Gross & McChrystal, 2001); to develop their professional knowledge, skills and motivation (Gibbs, 2007) especially in relation to the needs of this group of pupils who are at the greatest risk of exclusion; to identify and acknowledge the vital role family has, as well as train them to support parents in developing a secured, family environment;
- Support pupils and their families to ensure that their voice is listened to; to provide ongoing and more specialised support to those pupils and or parents who appeared to be at greatest risk and further support them to develop resilience, for instance, through individual work with the child, consultation with parents who are experiencing major risk events to help them strengthen their resilience; the delivery of parenting skills and support groups, other activities in the context of the community.

EPs should work holistically, at institutional as well as at individual level (Scott, 2008) which means working at the level of the system and with individuals i.e. the pupil, parent, teacher. In conclusion, EPs' main contribution would be to coordinate parties to share their knowledge, skills and understandings and to ensure their engagement in good collaborative work.

6.4 Methodological Limitations

Some limitations were revealed during the preparation and completion of this project. The first issue concerns the small number of participants who took part in this research. Overall, thirteen pupils participated. Group One consisted of seven pupils and Group Two consisted of six. However, the fact this group of pupils and their families are hard to access needs to be acknowledged. The researcher invited all the schools and settings based in the area, but only for those thirteen pupils was parental consent received.

Regarding the first group of pupils, the recruitment of the participants had restrictions, as it was solely reliant on those parents who would be interested to give permission for their child to take part in the study. It could be argued how the sample selected itself, as, despite the large number of possible participants, only those whose parents agreed could participate in this project. Regarding the second group of pupils, possible participants were identified by the school staff members who were responsible for pupils' PSP. It is possible that biases may have occurred, as the selection of these participants was reliant upon these teachers' judgments. It is also possible that school staff may have chosen pupils whose parents were considered to be willing to take part in this project. This could be linked to the positive parenting skills and active parental support that emerged in pupils' narratives. It is likely the sample in the second group represents pupils whose parents already had good links with school and indicated positive parental skills.

Furthermore, the composition of the second group of pupils was based on specific criteria established by the researcher, since there was limited previous information to support the judgment for the selection of this group. However it could be in doubt whether the period of time set for pupils to have a successful PSP was long enough to ensure that these pupils did, indeed, avoid exclusion in the long term. This was not possible to provide additional time because of the constraints of this research study.

So, the two groups composed to constitute the sample of this research project were not matched. They were uneven in number, and differed in terms of age, year group, and gender ratio. However, this study was an opportunity for the most disaffected pupils' voices to be listened to, as the purpose was not to compare two matched group of pupils, but to give voice to the excluded pupils.

Due to the characteristics of the sample and its uniqueness, any generalisations from the results of this study would not be possible. However, this qualitative research project was mainly concerned with pupils' experiences and with the exploration of events based on their perceptions rather than identifying cause-effect relationships across a wider population. Therefore, these findings should only be considered in relation to the participants involved in this study, as the results and conclusions reported here could not be generalised to all excluded or at risk exclusion pupils. However, the findings presented in this study provide adequate indication regarding the factors causing school exclusion and offers a different perspective on factors preventing exclusion. Indeed, similar themes to those

emerging in this study could be found in other studies in this field, as they have could relevance to other excluded or at risk students.

Therefore, in spite of the fact that these findings cannot be generalised, ideas about what causes and manages to avoid school exclusion could be generated based on the findings. According to Mays and Pope (2000) generativity refers to the extent to which the research contributes to the generation of ideas for further investigation. This study has contributed to a richer and deeper understanding of how to prevent school exclusion and has highlighted areas for future research and investigation.

Findings from this project revealed from pupils' narratives. Even though the researcher supports the notion that only when systemic thinking and interactionist approaches are applied, can school exclusion be better understood; this project solely focused on one group – young excluded people. In spite of applying principles of systemic thinking during the investigation of these young people's voices, i.e. use of systemic questioning in interviews, it may be argued how this approach has been limited as it only drew on pupils' views. However as previously stated, the main purpose of this project was to give voice to the most disaffected young pupils.

Another methodological limitation could be the suitability of this particular questionnaire. Even though data collected from the PASS questionnaire were used in some ways, it could be suggested that this tool was not the most appropriate one. As reported in the Methodology Chapter, use of this questionnaire was mainly suggested by the LA as part of an initiative to be introduced and used across the

county. However, future studies could possibly consider different or more appropriate tools.

A critical examination of the pupils' PASS profiles suggests that this tool may have failed to identify pupils being 'at risk' of exclusion. It is of interest that an application of the PASS questionnaire is to track and early identify young people 'at risk'.

According to the authors of this questionnaire, the vulnerable young population tends to score significantly low in the factors measured. In particular, scoring below the 25th percentile (the bottom quartile) can be considered as '*concerning*' whereas scoring below the 5th percentile can be considered as '*a high cause for concern*'. However, the majority of the pupils who participated in this project 'failed' to score significantly low. Only one Group One pupil scored below the 5th percentile that could be considered as to be causing high concerns, in addition to a few Group One pupils who scored below the 25th percentile, whose performance could be identified as to be causing some concerns. No Group Two pupil scored sufficiently low to cause any concerns. It could be argued that this questionnaire 'failed' to identify pupils 'at risk', even though all participants, unexceptionally, experienced some form of exclusion in their school life and should be at least considered as an 'at risk population' – as their interview responses primarily confirmed was the case. Based on this evidence, this questionnaire's reliability and validity are questionable.

These conclusions highlight the necessity to create a more appropriate measure for use with this population that can offer valuable quantitative information when exploring issues of school exclusion.

Difficulties tracking people to participate in the second phase of this project was another issue when the researcher aimed to explore family factors in more detail. Specifically, a year after the completion of the main phase of this project, the researcher tried to collect additional information in relation to participants' progress at school, examine any incidents of exclusion, and most importantly, explore family factors revealed in pupils' narratives as protective factors to exclusion in more depth. However, when the researcher reached parents requesting for their and their daughter/son participation in this second round of interviews, parents/carers refused to take part. When contacted most parents said their child was now progressing well, improving his behaviour and preferred not to discuss the 'school exclusion topic' again. Some parents explained how this can be overwhelming for them and their family, as this has been a difficult situation for all. In addition, one family moved out from the area and it has not been possible to find their whereabouts.

Difficulties such as these mentioned have been reported in the past in similar studies and highlight the difficulty in recruiting people to participate in projects studying school exclusion. Indeed, school exclusion is a sensitive topic and not many people, pupils and parents, are willing to take part in projects such as this. This is a hard-to-reach population, but only when their views are investigated, can a better understanding of school exclusion be achieved.

6.5 Original Contribution and Recommendations for Future Research

Although school exclusion has been under investigation for decades now, the recruitment of pupils who are at the greatest risk of exclusion in these studies has not been a common practice. Studies comparing excluded pupils with those who were at risk are briefly mentioned in the literature available. Also, there is a general lack of research regarding the investigation of factors and processes that make school exclusion less likely. Therefore, this study intended to identify those factors that are important in ameliorating exclusion rates, rather than just identify factors that make exclusion more likely, by investigating the narratives of two groups of pupils, excluded and 'at the greatest risk' of exclusion pupils. This is the basis of a claim of making an original contribution in the research area of school exclusion.

The sub-sample here is far too small to allow conclusions to be drawn but it does emphasise important findings and areas for further research. What this small group shows is how the experiences of at risk students differ from those of permanently excluded students in ways that are important to prevent exclusion.

The main findings of this study concerned the existence of family factors and the impact of these on making exclusion less likely to occur. This study revealed that the presence of family support could be a critical factor for pupils to avoid school exclusion.

Indeed, differences in the two groups' narratives highlight the importance of pupils being nurtured within a positive and supportive home environment which can be a protective factor to remain in a mainstream setting. Family support revealed to be a protective factor to avoid exclusion, however this is an area that needs to be understood and explored further.

These findings draw attention to possible areas for future research, such as the nature of parental support provided and the impact this may have on determining the direction of the outcome. For example, future research could investigate pupils at risk long term, in order to determine how the eventual outcome relates to earlier variation in family support. This kind of longitudinal study could be the only way establishing causal relationships.

6.6 Concluding Comment

School exclusion can be one of the worst forms of rejection for a student. It is our responsibility, as professionals working with children, their families, schools and communities, to "oil the wheel" of change where schools and teachers would feel competent to educate their students, parents would feel confident to raise their children and young people themselves would feel loved, supported and motivated again to change their lives for the best. Marco, one of the boys who were at risk, said *"I was just terrified that I would be expelled forever, and I didn't want that... never again... this experience... you learn from your mistakes. And I have learnt from my mistakes."* It is time for the experiences of these young people to be listened to by

teachers and other professionals so that their experiences can be and learned from, their voice should be valued so we can support them to avoid going through this profoundly negative experience of school exclusion.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: The Extent of School Exclusion

The national and local statistics capturing the extent of school exclusion are presented in the table below. This information is based on the official exclusion statistics published data.

National Figures							
	2000/01	2001/02	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07
Permanent School Exclusion							
Number of permanent exclusions	9,160	9,590	9,340	9,880	9,400	9,170	8,680
Percentage of school population	0.12	0.12	0.12	0.13	0.12	0.12	0.12
Local Figures							
	2000/01	2001/02	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07
Permanent School Exclusion							
Number of permanent exclusions	--	--	--	4	10	10	--
Percentage of school population				0.01	0.01	0.01	

National Figures							
	2000/01	2001/02	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07
Fixed Period Exclusions							
Number of fixed period exclusions	--	--	--	344,510	389,560	343,840	425,600
Percentage of school population				4.49	5.12	10.40	5.66
Local Figures							
	2000/01	2001/02	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07
Fixed Period Exclusions							
Number of fixed period exclusions	--	--	--	--	2,510	2,705	--
Percentage of school population					3.23	8.27	

Sources: Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF), Statistical First Releases
<http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/>

Appendix 2: Letter sent to Schools

Dear Mr/s,

Research Project on 'School Exclusion: Exploring Young People's and Teachers' Perspectives'

I am conducting research on school exclusion, as part of my training on the Doctorate in Professional Educational Child and Adolescent Psychology course at the Institute of Education. The project is co-ordinated by Professor Andrew Tolmie and Shaalan Farouk in the Department of Psychology and Human Development. The aims and principles of this project have also been shared with the Office of Children and Young People's Services (OCYPS) in X County Council. The research will be carried out by myself, Christiana Loizidou, working as a trainee Educational Psychologist at the X Educational Psychology Service.

Research Aims

The aim of this project is to elicit pupils' views about school exclusion. In particular, the perceptions of pupils who were 'at risk' of exclusion and those who have been excluded, will be explored and analysed. Then, teachers' views on school exclusion will be elicited. Possible theories and explanations on how and why exclusion is occurring and, most importantly, how it is sometimes avoided will be constructed – this research mainly aims to use an understanding of the factors that help exclusion to be avoided in order to suggest ways of developing more positive strategies for dealing with those pupils who are at risk.

Previous research has well justified that obtaining pupils' own views is a potentially valuable part of gaining an understanding of the factors that work to avoid exclusion.

What the Research would involve

X is an authority with low levels of exclusion; different policies have been put in place with the aim to reduce school exclusion i.e. the 'Managed Move' policy. Pupils who have been excluded from school or have been referred to an 'out of school' provision will be identified and asked to participate in this project. Similarly, pupils who have been 'at risk' of being excluded from school or being referred to an 'out of school' provision, but somehow this was avoided, will also be identified and asked to participate. Therefore, both secondary mainstream schools and 'out of school' provisions based in X will be approached.

The research would involve a small group of pupils in Year 9 and a small group of teachers. All schools and provisions involved would be required to do very little extra work, beyond helping me to identify participants – pupils and teachers. Thereafter, I would collect all the information in the form of interviews.

I have a good deal of experience working in schools and all information collected will be treated in the strictest confidence. All pupils, teachers and schools involved will be anonymous, participation will only take place with full informed consent, and all data will be treated in accordance with the Data Protection Act.

Possible research outcomes

Results are expected to be of interest and use to school staff. They will be of use in school policies on inclusive education and the management of school exclusion. It is hoped that the results will help better understanding of school exclusion. I am more than willing to share results with you as well as any conclusions for the group as a whole, although reports on individual participants will not be possible.

You are invited to participate in this research project. I will contact you in the next few days to see if you would be interested. If, in the meantime, you require further information please contact myself, Christiana Loizidou (tel. ...; email address:).

Yours sincerely,

Christiana Loizidou
Trainee Educational Psychologist

Appendix 3: Letter sent to Parents

Dear Mr/s,

School Exclusion: Exploring Young People's and Teachers' Perspectives

My name is Christiana and I am a Trainee Educational Psychologist carrying out a research project. The aim of this study is to investigate the pupils' and teachers' views about school exclusion. In particular, this study will examine possible differences between the perceptions of these two groups, with the aim of understanding more about how and why exclusion is occurring and how it is sometimes avoided.

Pupils and teachers will be asked to participate in an interview, which will take approximately 40 minutes. All responses will be completely anonymous.

If you give your consent for your child to take part in this study, please sign the consent form attached and ask your child to return it to (school/setting). Alternatively please feel free to use the stamped addressed envelope provided. All personal information obtained will remain confidential. Your name or your child's name will at no time occur in any part of this study's report, and the interview data will be coded, to ensure anonymity.

Participants may withdraw from this study at any time if they feel uncomfortable.

If you have any further queries please do not hesitate to contact me at the above address or feel free to ask questions at any time throughout the interview.

Thank you in advance for your participation.

Yours sincerely,

Christiana Loizidou

Trainee Educational Psychologist

Encs

CONSENT FORM (attached to the letter)

Title: School Exclusion: Exploring Young People's and Teachers' Perspectives

Name of researcher: Christiana Loizidou

Parent/Guardian's Consent

I have been informed of and understand the purposes of this study and its procedures and I give my consent my child to participate in this project.

I understand that the data collected for this study is strictly confidential and I or any other member of my family will not be identifiable in any report of this study.

Print name

Signature

.....

.....

Pupil's Consent

I have been informed of and understand the purposes of this study and its procedures and wish to participate. I also understand that in the debriefing session at the end of my participation I will have further opportunity to ask any questions about this study.

I understand that the data collected for this study is strictly confidential and I will not be identifiable in any report of this study.

I further understand that I may withdraw from the study at any time without prejudice to me.

Print name

Signature

.....

.....

Researcher's statement

I have informed the above named participant of the nature and purpose of this study and have sought to answer any question to the best of my ability. I have read, understood, and agree to abide by the Ethical Principles for Conducting Research set out by the British Psychological Society in carrying out this study.

Signed

.....

Appendix 4: Information Sheet given to Pupils

School Exclusion: Exploring Young People's and Teachers' Perspectives

The aim of this study is to investigate the pupils' and teachers' views about school exclusion. In particular, this study will examine possible differences between the perceptions of these two groups, with the aim of understanding more about how and why exclusion is occurring and how it is sometimes avoided.

Pupils and teachers will be asked to participate in an interview, which will take approximately 40 minutes. All responses will be completely anonymous.

If you give your consent your child to take part in this study, please sign the consent form attached and return it to myself. All the personal information obtained will remain confidential. Your name or your child's name will at no time occur in any part of this study's report, and the interview data will be coded, to ensure anonymity.

Participants may withdraw from this study at any time if they feel uncomfortable. Please feel free to ask questions at any time.

Thank you for your participation.

Christiana Loizidou
Trainee Educational Psychologist

Appendix 5: Consent Form

This was given to pupils prior to their interview.

Pupil's Consent

I have been informed of and understand the purposes of this study and its procedures and wish to participate. I also understand that in the debriefing session at the end of my participation I will have further opportunity to ask any questions about this study.

I understand that the data collected for this study is strictly confidential and I will not be identifiable in any report of this study.

I further understand that I may withdraw from the study at any time without prejudice to me.

Print name

Signature

.....

.....

Researcher's statement

I have informed the above named participant of the nature and purpose of this study and have sought to answer any question to the best of my ability. I have read, understood, and agree to abide by the Ethical Principles for Conducting Research set out by the British Psychological Society in carrying out this study.

Signed

.....

Appendix 6: PASS Factor Summary

F1: FEELINGS ABOUT SCHOOL

This measure samples a young person's feelings of inclusion in, or alienation from, the school community. A low score on F1 can indicate feelings of school exclusion and also potentially bullying. E.g. "I am happy when I am in school; I feel safe."

F2: PERCEIVED LEARNING CAPABILITY

This measures the feelings of success (or lack of success) that a young person has. It is a recently introduced measure which seeks to capture the feelings experienced in the 'here and now'. It offers a snapshot of a learner's unfolding impressions of his/her 'self efficacy' and its value lies in the fact that it can provide early warning of demoralization and possibly, later, disaffection. E.g. "I can read well."

F3: SELF-REGARD

This is a much robust measure than F2 of the learner's sense of self worth measured in the long term. The generic equivalent is called 'self-esteem' but is much more focused on learning and consequently has a greater correlation with achievement than standard measures of self-esteem commonly used in other environments, such as the workplace for example. In simple terms, it can be thought of as a cumulative account of the many F2 'snapshots' collected over a period of time. It would be feasible for a learner to feel uneasy about his/her current learning capabilities in the immediate short term while retaining a general impression of him/her self as likely to be successful in the long term. E.g. "Learning is difficult."

F4: PREPAREDNESS FOR LEARNING

These questions prompt young people to stand back from their learning situation and ask themselves 'Do I have the tools to do the learning job?' It is mainly about study skills, including attentiveness, powers of concentration and emotional responses to learning demands. It would be quite possible for a learner to score very low on this measure while retaining strong self regard. Of all the factors this one correlates most

closely with behavioural difficulties in the classroom. E.g. "I know how to be a good learner."

F5: ATTITUDES TO TEACHERS

This measures a young person's perceptions of the relationships they have with the adults they work with in school. Interestingly, of all the factors this one is the most positive in terms of maximum response nationally. E.g. "I like my teachers."

F6: GENERAL WORK ETHIC

The first of two motivational measures. It is about motivation to succeed in life. It is about purpose and direction, not just at school but beyond. E.g. "Working hard in school will help me in the future".

F7: CONFIDENCE IN LEARNING

This is a measure of perseverance in the face of challenge. Does a student see themselves as giving up at the first hurdle or do they see themselves as having 'stickability'? It differs from F2 and F4 in its focus on specific learning situations. A student may agree with the prompt 'I enjoy doing difficult work at school' while in the grip of a present anxiety about how well equipped he/she is to tackle it successfully or disaffection with many of the learning situations she is encountering currently. E.g. "I enjoy doing hard school work".

F8: ATTITUDES TO ATTENDANCE

This factor is self explanatory. It is very highly correlated with an individual's actual attendance. E.g. "I'd rather be somewhere else than in school."

F9: RESPONSE TO CURRICULUM DEMANDS

The second motivational measure. This time learners are asked to focus more narrowly on their motivation to undertake and complete tasks set within the school's curriculum. E.g. "I am bored at school".

Appendix 7: PASS Questionnaire

Instructions:

Please click on the button which best describes how much you agree with the words on the blackboard

- A. Yes a lot
- B. Yes a bit
- C. No, not much
- D. No, not at all

Questions:

1. I think carefully about my work
2. I worry about getting my work right
3. I can ask my teacher when I am stuck with my work
4. I enjoy doing hard school work
5. I can concentrate on my work in class
6. I know how to solve the problems in my school work
7. I like doing school work at home
8. This school is a friendly place
9. Teachers explain things well
10. My attendance at school is good
11. Problem solving is fun
12. I'd rather be somewhere else than in school
13. I think the rules in school are fair
14. I can read well
15. I think this is a good school
16. I like doing tests
17. I am lonely at school
18. My teachers expect me to work hard
19. I behave well in class

20. I like having difficult school work to do
21. I like discussing things
22. I like using my brain
23. I know how to be a good learner
24. Learning is difficult
25. I'm not good at solving problems
26. I find school work too difficult for me
27. I am bored at school
28. My teacher notices when I have worked hard
29. I am happy when I am in school
30. I am on time for lessons
31. I like being at school
32. When I get stuck with my work, I can work out what to do next
33. I like having problems to solve
34. I need more help with my work
35. My teachers tell me when I have done something well
36. I feel safe when I am in school
37. I get into trouble during breaks or lunchtimes
38. Learning new things is easy for me
39. I know the meaning of a lot of words
40. I like my teachers
41. I feel I belong to this school
42. I am clever
43. I make mistakes with my work
44. Working hard in school will help me in the future
45. The work I have to do in class is too easy
46. Thinking carefully about your work helps you do it better
47. I get anxious when I have to do new work
48. I try to do my best in lessons
49. I can do my homework easily
50. When I'm given new work to do, I feel confident I can do it

Appendix 8: Thematic Map: Themes

Thematic Map:

School Experiences, Family Experiences, Personal Attributions Themes

Theme	Sub-Theme	Sub-Theme Categories and their Descriptors
1. School Experiences	Experiences with Teachers	Attribution of Negative Qualities to Teachers These included: negative relationship (shouting, no respect); poor communication (not listening); negative attitudes (i.e. pick them on, provoke them); different treatment (sense of worthiness).
		Attribution of Positive Qualities to Teachers These included: positive relationship (understanding); good communication (good listening); teaching qualities.
		Teachers Inconsistent Practice These included the existence of two types of teachers, soft and strict, particularly on matters of discipline.
	Learning Experiences	Difficulties Accessing Learning These included: literacy difficulties; concentration problems; limited attention skills; hearing problems.
		Support for Accessing Learning These included support provided by school and individual teachers i.e. given extra work; visual, practical aids; learning mentor; special behavioural arrangements.
	Experiences with Peers	Peer Relations These included negative peer relations, i.e. fighting, bullying, and the type of these peer relations (e.g. with older people).

		School Life Events affecting Peer Relations These included: school change, and secondary school transition.
2. Family Experiences	Family Circumstances	Family Life Events These included: parent's divorce/separation; father abandonment; reconstituted families; fostering; bereavement (death of a close family member).
		Ongoing Family Difficulties These included: domestic violence; parental arguments; mother's mental illness (e.g. depression); father imprisonment; overcrowded living conditions.
	Family Dynamics	Positive Relations These included: good communication; supportive environment.
		Negative Relations These included: poor communication; limited interaction; unsupported environment.
3. Personal Attributions	Sense of Fairness / Unfairness	Fair Exclusion
		Unfair Treatment (comparing self to others)
	Locus of Control	Blaming i.e. self, others
		Willingness to Change
		Feelings of Regrets
	Pupil's Insight: Understanding of Pupils' Disruptive Behaviour and Teachers' Reactions	

Appendix 9: Thematic Map: Summary

Thematic Map: Summary of Main Findings in School Experiences, Family

Experiences, Personal Attributions Themes

Theme	Sub-Theme
1. School Experiences	<p>Experiences with Teachers</p> <p>Attribution of Negative Qualities to Teachers Both groups of pupils described their negative relationship with their teachers (i.e. shouting, not being listened, lack of respect) and their 'bad' treatment (e.g. scrambling up their work). Also, both groups described their teachers' negative attitude towards them resulting to a 'different' treatment.</p> <p>Attribution of Positive Qualities to Teachers Both groups described the qualities of a 'good' teacher (i.e. staying calm, not shouting, showing understanding, caring about them, remaining calm, treating everyone equally, making lessons interesting, valuing education, having sense of humour). These are based on their personal past experiences, explaining that during their school life they had come across with a few 'good' teachers.</p> <p>Teachers Inconsistent Practice Both groups described the existence of two types of teachers, soft and strict, particularly on matters of discipline.</p>
	<p>Learning Experiences</p> <p>Difficulties Accessing Learning Both groups described experiencing difficulty at school, including literacy difficulties; concentration problems; limited attention skills; hearing problem – sometimes linked to emotional and behavioural problems.</p> <p>Support for Accessing Learning Group One pupils felt that school could not understand the nature of their difficulties at school, and therefore did not receive support from school. Group Two pupils described receiving some sort of in-classroom support to access learning, mostly provided by individual teachers.</p>
	<p>Experiences with Peers</p> <p>Peer Relations Most pupils described their peer relations as poor and or in negative light i.e. fighting; being bullied, rejected.</p> <p>School Life Events affecting Peer Relations Pupils described critical periods in their school life, e.g. school change, secondary school transition, that may have negatively impacted upon their peer relationships.</p>

<p>2. Family Experiences</p>	<p>Family Circumstances Family Life Events Both groups described incidents that occurred in their family life including parents' divorce/separation; father abandonment; reconstituted families; fostering; bereavement (death of a close family member). Ongoing Family Difficulties Both groups revealed having often experienced on-going difficulties that related to family issue, for instance domestic violence; parental arguments; mother's mental illness (e.g. depression); father imprisonment; overcrowded living conditions.</p> <p>Family Dynamics Positive Relations Most Group Two pupils described experiencing positive relationships with their parents and in some cases with their siblings. They described a supportive, encouraging home environment despite the existence of negative family circumstances. Negative Relations Group One pupils appeared to experience more negative and problematic relationships with their parents.</p>
<p>3. Personal Attributions</p>	<p>Sense of Fairness / Unfairness A vast majority of pupils expressed the belief that they had been treated fairly in terms of having disobeyed the school rules, but then not fairly, as others had not been punished in the same way.</p> <p>Locus of Control Most pupils took responsibility for their actions by blaming themselves. Some pupils, after taking responsibility of their actions, pointed out how they wanted to change. Group 1 pupils expressed some feelings of regrets for their actions, requesting for a second chance.</p> <p>Pupil's Insight All pupils could show some understanding of teachers' reaction to exclude pupils who display disruptive behaviour.</p>

Appendix 10: Transcript Samples

Pseudonym: Freddie

Research Group One

Researcher (R): Try and go back in time, imagine yourself being in Year 7, just before got suspended. Can you please describe me how things were at school with your friends?

Participant (P): Fine, I didn't have any problems with my mates. I just kept myself to myself. Then I started getting into fights... fights about nothing... just about little things. I was fighting with people older than me. I never fight people in my age. I fought with people older than me.

R: What can you tell me about your friends, how were things between you and them?

P: Well, I had a lot of friends... but there were a couple of people that didn't really like me. I always had some close friends, but when I got kicked out, they drifted away because I don't see them much. I, now, I found some new close friends obviously.

R: So it is quite hard to keep in touch when you don't see them

P: Yeah

[...]

R: When you were at school, in Year 7, how did you get on with your teachers?

P: Not very good. Some teachers were... they understood why I get angry sometimes. But there were some teachers, basically they provoked me they just wanted to see me angry because they didn't like me and then... Just because of the way I speak to people, because it was quite rude that time, and the way I speak to teachers especially, well... because I don't like them thinking that they have full power on me.

R: You are saying that there were some teachers who were ok and some who provoked you? Let's talk a little bit more about the first group of teachers, those who were ok.

P: That was all right. If they know that I'm gonna get angry, if it was that type of teacher, then I just sit in the classroom and do whatever they tell me to do, because I would respect them more. If I liked the teacher, I would sit down and do my work. As if I didn't, I wouldn't do my work.

R: And what would you do when you had to deal with a teacher from the second group?

P: I wouldn't listen to them. They tell me to do something, I would just not listen to them and being rude basically. And then I get sent out of the classroom, get detention, just little things, just little punishments that make no differences and then all end up to get kicked out.

[...]

R: How did you manage your schoolwork when you were at school? Did you have any difficulties with any lessons?

P: I've always been smart, everyone has already said that I am not that dumb. Even I was rude, I was never dumb. That's why they kept me in so long because they knew that academically wise I was good at subjects. I was smart. I was rude as a person. But yeah, when it comes to tests and stuff, I have always tried because I knew I was good at it.

R: So you are saying that this is why they have kept you in so long. What do you mean exactly by this?

P: They gave me quite a lot of chances and the reason they gave so many chances is because I was smart. So it was worth keep me in. I could've done some work, class smart work.

R: So you feel that because you are smart you've stayed longer at school, even though you've been rude to teachers?

P: Yeah.

[...]

R: Ok, when things got really bad, did you receive any kind support from school? Did anybody talk to you about the consequences of being expelled?

P: I got the managed move person. If I thought that I was gonna lose it in the classroom I could go out, walk out and go see her and talk to her about it. But I never really did. I just normally walked downstairs.

R: How these arrangements work out for you?

P: Well, it was just like... if I thought that I was gonna get angry, I could take myself out from a bad situation and go and see her and talk to her about it and when I was calmed down I could go back into class. I did it sometimes but not very often. It wasn't really helpful. They kept kicking me out from class.

[...]

R: You said that you were doing well academically, but there were some issues with your behaviour, right? Was it in Year 7 you said?

P: Yeah, well that started... for ever. I always had a bad attitude towards teachers... awfully. But in Year 7, I was just moved up to a new school. I was young. I got from being the oldest in my junior, be the youngest in my other school and then because I was the youngest obviously... people like... people try picking on the youngest people, so I get a lot of picking on and I had to stick up on myself, which was frustrating.

R: What was really happening?

P: Well, basically just getting in a little fight in X school because I am quite... I got a lot of pride and I don't back down so I had to end up fighting so much. All the time I had to fight with someone.

R: You got a lot of pride...

P: Yeah, mostly back then it was about my pride. Well now... still is, I don't like someone to treat me like an idiot. So when someone treats me like an idiot, I have to stand up to myself, so it always will be like that. No one can really treat anyone like this.

R: So you stood up yourself

P: Yeah

R: When do you feel you have to stand up for yourself?

P: Hmm like... if someone is being aggressive towards me, if someone hurts or says anything bad about me, something like that.

[...]

R: Again I want you to imagine yourself being in Year 7 and try and describe me how things were at home.

P: Fine. Everything has always been fine. Cause the teachers always used to ask me if like I was doing bad at school, they thought if there was to do with something happening at home, but it never was, it was just... just the way I stand up for myself.

[...]

P: My oldest sister never lived with us because she was 30 by the time I was basically born; no she was like 20. And my oldest brother passed away before I was born, and... yeah I've lived with my other brother and sister. But I only went to school with my sister for one year when I was in junior school. Now I live with my mum.

R: How about your dad?

P: I've lived with my dad in junior school. When I was in Year 6, my dad and mum split up.

R: Do you remember what was happening back then when your parents split up?

P: Fine. My mum and dad didn't make a big fuss when they split up, they just sat us down, and they said that they don't love each other any more. And I was fine... I didn't mind, because they never really got on for a couple of years and I knew it was for the best. And it was for the best, because the atmosphere in the house was better.

R: So you knew how the situation was between your parents and you feel that it was for the best.

P: Yeah.

R: Ok, when you started having some troubles at school and you got suspended, what did your mum and dad say?

P: Well, my mum is more linear than my dad; my dad is a lot more strict. My mum just sits me down and talks to me about it and wants me to tell her what happened, because obviously she doesn't know what happened. But my dad gets a lot more angry and he sits me down and tells me what I have to do, how I have to change and knock it out and stuff.

R: How do you feel about this?

P: Ahh... a bit angry with my dad. I knew what he meant because obviously he didn't want me to be kicked out, I knew he was trying to do good to me but obviously he got me angry... him telling me, because I am gonna try and do it on myself, I didn't want him to tell me. But honestly I understood what he said.

[...]

R: Do you remember the day you got permanently excluded? What did happen? Can you describe me that specific day? Why you got expelled?

P: Hmm, I don't know what that really was. I think that I did just a little thing and that was my last chance. I think it was not just a major thing, it was lots and lots of little things really and then they just couldn't... and they've decided to kick me out basically in the end, because they gave me too many chances.

R: Little things, for example?

P: Just like fights and stuff, basically, just little fights... and then I fought and I got split up and I got sent home... and I would be rude or something. In the lessons I wasn't too bad, they always said, all the teachers some time said to me that in the lessons I am not as bad, it's like, is more in lunch, in my lunch time. Cause I had to leave in my lunch time for like six months, I didn't have any lunch, I had to go out every lunch because that's when I got into all these fights, and then my rudeness still was quite bad in the classes

but I think they were more worried about what get me into those fights in lunch time and stuff and they've sent me home.

R: How did you feel when you were asked to leave school during lunch breaks?

P: I was well annoyed... well annoyed when they sent me home because for the whole day it was the only time that I could sit and talk to my mates, like talk to them properly, and they took that away from me. Obviously I would be angry. But there was nothing I could do about it, so I just started to deal with it, so I've tried to do better at school obviously to give me that back...

R: You are saying you felt annoyed? What do you mean by that?

P: I was really bothered. I was just trying to be good really. I was just trying to get my lunch back, because they started taking things away from me, and it made me more and more angry, so I had to try and stay calmed a lot of time, which I did some times but not all the time.

[...]

R: Can you recall that specific day you got expelled permanently from school?

P: Yeah, I think, I think I got in a fight at lunch and then I went to my class, and after, still all were angry, I was quite rude to a teacher, I was still well angry. And then the head master came and took me out, my dad was waiting there outside and they've told me that I get expelled so I started swearing, I got nuts to everyone and I was well angry because I knew... I was just angry because I was thinking... I was well angry, I was annoyed, I was annoyed. I was well angry basically...

R: Then what happened?

P: They just told me to go, and I went offside and my dad took me and talked to me and everything and I think he was upset as well and just talked to me about it and then went home and talked more about it and then... that was it really.

R: How did you feel?

P: I was upset obviously.

R: What were you thinking?

P: Well, I thought that I didn't really know what is going to happen. I didn't know how I was gonna get educated and things like that. And I didn't know if I was gonna see my mates...

R: What do you think you could do to avoid being expelled?

P: Obviously I could not have done anything wrong, but no one is perfect so...

R: What do you think you have done wrong?

P: Just the way I speak to people, I knew... still now, when I speak to someone rude really I am not doing it... it's just me saying what I really want to say, I can't stop myself from doing that...

R: Do you think that if you were not rude you could have stayed at school?

P: Yeah, and obviously not fighting as well, but mainly not being rude.

R: Can you identify possible reasons, those little things that got you expelled?

P: Because I was rude... and I got into many fights, because I was rude to the teachers.

R: In general, what do you think are the main reasons that pupils might get expelled from school?

P: Probably the same reasons that I got kicked out from, being rude and fighting. But I am not sure... bad behaviour...

[...]

R: Who do you blame for what has happened?

P: Myself, just me, it was just my fault, nobody else's fault that I was kicked out.

R: Do you think that you could do things differently?

P: Yeah, if I were back in mainstream I could be very different.

R: Was it fair that you were kicked out? What do you think?

P: Well, I don't know, because I don't know how many chances they give you... obviously in my eyes I don't think it's right because it's me. Obviously I don't want to kick myself out. But I don't know... maybe they think that they gave me enough chances and it was time to kick me out

R: Do you think that they have given you enough chances?

P: Yeah, probably... probably they did, they gave me enough chances.

R: Have you discussed this with anyone before being expelled? Did you know how many chances they have given you?

P: No I haven't, but I already knew how many times I got suspended but I don't know how many chances you have... I got suspended a few times. I think there are a certain number of suspensions and then you get expelled

R: So do you think it was a fair thing to happen?

P: Yeah, probably it was fair.

R: How do you feel school and teachers have treated you when you were at mainstream?

P: Not very fairly I think... well I've been treated quite nasty. I don't know why, I think they didn't like me because they didn't like my sister 'cause my sister was kicked out as

well and she was in X school, so maybe they just get me back. She was quite rude. It reflected back on me. Because my brother, my brother was always good, he didn't get in any trouble. And then my sister went there and they probably thought that she was going to be good and she was bad and then I came down and they probably didn't know what to think and I turned up quite bad as well.

R: How do you feel now? How are things now that you are here?

P: Well, I am not gonna get good education from here, am I? Cause it's only two and a half hours every day and I didn't do my SATs this year, if I was in mainstream, I would have done my SATs this year, but I didn't and obviously if I am still here I won't get to do my GCSEs and all this stuff. So obviously it gonna affect my education me coming here, me kicking out...

R: What would you like to happen?

P: I am waiting... I want them to give me one more chance and go back to school. I could go once a week, in a couple of lessons and see how it likes, because if I go back now, I would be perfect, I would do nothing wrong, because I want my education back... I've missed so much; I've missed a year and a half so obviously I've missed a lot of work so I wanna catch up. So if I were back to mainstream I would knuckle down. As soon as I was out, I wanted to go back. I regret it now obviously but I am still here... I am just waiting to give me another chance.

Pseudonym: Antonio
Research Group Two

[...]

Participant (P): When I was in X, I've been to two primary schools. Also I went to a secondary school back in X, and then we've decided to move house.

Researcher (R): How did you feel about changing schools?

P: Well, it has been like... some changes have been good and some have been bad. Because when I went to the second primary school, I was away from all those people, so that was pretty good. Then, when I went back to a school where they were all there... so now I've moved away, no one knows me really, well they do now, but they didn't. So it was like a brand new start really.

[...]

R: Do you remember how you were getting on when you were in primary?

P: That's pretty rubbish because I didn't get really along with teachers, they used to bully me a lot, like tell other kids to do some good stuff and then tell me do some really hard work and stuff like that, so the kids used to bully me and carried on and carried on. Because I had short temper I used to tell... and stuff like that, so I had a lot of suspensions and things.

R: Why did you get suspended?

P: Lots of things... verbal stuff, physical stuff, everything really. Because they used to treat me different with everyone else, so I felt different from them. They used to treat me differently...

R: Can you please give me an example? When you are saying that you were treated in a different way, what do you mean?

P: Like, they would say, like, to everyone, you can go and play for 5 minutes and then send me do some really hard work, that I haven't done it before... they were treating me harsh when they shouldn't have been. And the kids used to stick up the teachers, they go like that 'that's my favourite teacher, why don't you like him' and stuff like that. And they used to bully me...

R: It seems that you were having difficult time back then and you got suspended a couple of times sometimes because of other's attitude? How did you feel about this?

P: I felt like really annoyed with them... they were doing things that they shouldn't be doing, they were sticking up like the kids they like and things like that, and I was just

probably one of the people that they didn't like, so they were bullying me and stuff like that.

R: Did you have any teachers that were treating you nicely?

P: In primary, Year 1 and 2 and Year 4, teachers were brilliant. They did everything to help me. They treated everyone equally. They did everything for me and everything right. But all the other years they stuck up with the people they like, only. And they just left all the other kids out to sort out themselves.

R: Can you explain this? Why do you think this was happening?

P: I don't really know... can't explain it...

R: Have there been other children that were treated in the same way as you did?

P: I think there was but it didn't show as much because they didn't show it like I did. They just kept it in and let it out in other ways.

[...]

R: When you moved to a secondary school, how was that transition, leaving primary school behind?

P: It was good but then it was bad because you were seeing the same people again from the first primary school. It was good like the first year, but when we went to Year 8 everyone knew me and I knew them, and they were just bullying me for no reason and it ended up with me working in the house office when I was in all the time (we had a house system). So I was treated differently then as well because I wasn't allowed to go and see my friends, I was told that it was for my own safety but they wouldn't let me go out.

R: You said mentioned that you went to two different primary schools. Why did you have to change schools?

P: Because just at the start of Year 6 a really big incidence happened where the head teacher came and got me and she said 'why are you doing all these stuff?' and I just totally lost it that day, so they had a meeting that day and they've decided not to have me in that school anymore so I had to move.

R: Can you tell me more about that incident? What did happen?

P: Well, the kids still were bullying me and basically I took things in my own hands because teachers weren't doing anything. So I just used to beat them up because they beat me up and teachers didn't like that and I got suspended. So they locked me in the head mistress office and I opened the window and jumped out and they came chasing after me, getting me and then my mum came in and then they said take me home so my

mum took me home and I think it was a week after that they have decided not to have me back in that school, because apparently they had enough of me or something...

R: how did you feel?

P: I felt relieved because I was getting away from all these people...

[...]

P: In Year 8 we have decided to move house because it was just escalating again and the same thing would happen in the secondary school, so we have decided to move house. I went to X for half term, it was all good except from that one incidence. What happened was that kid pushed me, pushed me, pushed me, and I ended up beating him up, and it is a lot more tough around here, like really stricter, so then they have decided not to have me back in that school and I came here and then I went to X school and they sorted it out.

R: What do you mean by saying they are more strict?

P: They are dealing with it in a better way really... and what they did down there because... before we have decided to move we had a meeting with the head master at my first secondary school and he said he wants to help me but he didn't have the money to do it, so, we have decided to move because obviously I wasn't gonna get better.

R: And how did you get on when you first move to this area here?

P: Brilliant when we came because I finally got my own room, big house, but it was just that one incidence that happened... but at the moment, in X (new school) is going fine, getting friends... hopefully it will be fine.

[...]

R: How did you get on with your peers?

P: I had only one close friend, her name was Rachel and I think a couple of years ago she moved to Australia, I think she is coming back this year, but we were keeping in contact and everything. She was one good friend. She was in primary with me, same year and everything.

R: Any other friends from your peer group?

P: I had some friends but they weren't really friends, friends. They were friends for a minute until they saw other people and went off with them... so I didn't have really any proper friends...in secondary, I've made a few more friends but they still weren't really proper friends... and I've got a lot of people that I can speak to because we go camping, and I've got few friends... it is like a camping club.

R: It seems that you have few friends outside the school

P: Yeah

R: How are you doing now with your peers in your new school?

P: I have a lot of friends in school now, because they don't know anything about me now, so I feel quite good now.

[...]

P: I have a younger brother he is ten and an oldest sister who is seventeen and I have two half brothers as well. My youngest half brother has just done his university degree so he has got a pretty good job at the moment, he is in ICT he makes programmes in computers and he gets quite a lot of money with that. And that's what I want to do, so, I'm asking him for advice on what he did to get the way he is. I think, I'm getting well with him, I think. But with my other half brother, he is a bit like me, and my dad said that he was actually the same as me, so he doesn't want me to end up like he is, he is actually in prison at the moment. And that's pretty bad I think...

(A half-brother from his dad's side – his dad was re-married)

[...]

P: My mum and dad backed me up all the way because they knew how it was like... my sister went in the same primary school and she was fine then, she was all right, just an average person, but she knew what was going on too, because I used to go and find her in the playground tell her everything, and she used to tell mum, and mum used to come in school and talk to them, but they won't listen, so my mum shouting at them... one day they ended up telling her 'you are just like your son', so my mum didn't have that... she just left...

R: It sounds to me that it was quite difficult for the whole family...

P: Yeah, we had a lot of talks at home and we were trying to sort it out, hopefully now it is gonna be ok

P: My dad... they've had different points of views sometimes with my mum but they have always sorted it out somehow

[...]

R: Going through all these during your school life... being suspended for a couple of times, changing schools a few times... having all these difficulties, who do you blame for all these?

P: Sometimes I do blame myself, because I don't help myself sometimes. Then, in primary it was actually them, it wasn't just me. I do blame myself a little bit but not as much as I blame the other people...

R: When you say 'other people' who do you mean?

P: Like the teachers and things, in the primary school

R: Why do you blame the teachers?

P: Because they could help me more, stop the people from bullying me, but they didn't and pupils kept bullying me, so... it was a chain reaction

R: What do you think they could have done to support you?

P: They could just sat me down and talked to me, but they never did, they just let it be... then they didn't like what they got after...

R: You also said that you blame yourself a little bit? Why do you blame yourself?

P: Yeah, because I do have short temper and little things do spark me off, but now I've started to see that there are just stupid things that I should really laugh at and now I am... I do see that now

R: Thinking about all these incidents that happened in your school life, imagine about the times that you got suspended, was it a fair thing to happen?

P: I think it was fair in some ways, but other ways I think they could have deal with it a little bit better

R: In some ways?

P: Yeah, because I wasn't absolutely perfect, I did like disturb some lessons, but they could just let it go and do something about me

R: Can you tell me why do you think you got suspended in the past? Why school has decided to expel you?

P: I think it was because they were scared of what was going to come after... they just wanted to get rid of me really. I think they were just like 'we don't like this person so we don't really want him, so we are not gonna treat him as good as we treat other people...'

R: In general, why do you think schools may exclude pupils?

P: Behaviour...

Appendix 11: PASS Individual Profiles

Pupils Percentile* Scores of nine factors measured, Group One and Group Two.

Group 1: Excluded Pupils									
	F1 Feelings about school	F2 Perceived learning capability	F3 Self- regard	F4 Prepared- ness for learning	F5 Attitudes to teachers	F6 General work ethic	F7 Confidence in learning	F8 Attitudes to attendance	F9 Response to curriculum demands
1. Freddie	21.7	48.6	39.5	61.8	64.0	63.7	78.8	25.1	34.9
2. Kyle	27.7	38.8	69.1	16.6	17.7	38.3	11.4	47.5	34.9
3. Taylor	4.4	3.3	10.4	4.8	45.1	63.7	18.5	1.5	11.6
4. Jordan	21.7	48.6	55.1	12.0	45.1	63.7	49.4	7.2	71.7
5. Stephanie	34.3	67.4	39.5	51.9	78.6	7.9	59.7	25.1	11.6
6. Emily	52.2	30.4	17.5	8.6	64.0	38.3	49.4	17.0	11.6
7. Ashley	27.7	17.7	88.2	4.8	45.1	84.2	11.4	76.0	84.6

Group 2: At Risk of Permanent Exclusion Pupils									
	F1 Feelings about school	F2 Perceived learning capability	F3 Self- regard	F4 Prepared- ness for learning	F5 Attitudes to teachers	F6 General work ethic	F7 Confidence in learning	F8 Attitudes to attendance	F9 Response to curriculum demands
1. Marco	96.7	86.0	68.0	56.0	74.4	61.2	77.1	90.3	83.8
2. Antonio	80.4	13.3	19.2	36.3	96.3	81.4	38.0	60.6	52.7
3. Maggie	98.8	67.4	39.5	85.1	97.0	95.4	98.1	96.1	34.9
4. Brooke	86.0	80.7	68.0	81.4	96.3	93.7	99.0	90.3	52.7
5. Cole	9.6	38.3	78.6	36.3	87.2	81.4	59.8	11.3	70.3
6. Owen	89.6	38.8	80.6	12.0	89.2	84.2	78.8	92.3	34.9

. * Higher the percentile score, the more positive the pupil attitude/self-perception.